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THE AMERICAN FACTOR IN THE EVOLUTION OF  
CHINA'S MARITIME DOCTRINE

BY

94-07751



Douglas A. Malin

DECEMBER 1993

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE 16 December, 1993	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE THE AMERICAN FACTOR IN THE EVOLUTION OF CHINA'S MARITIME DOCTRINE		5. FUNDING NUMBERS		
6. AUTHOR(S) Douglas A. Malin				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey CA 93943-5000		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER		
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE *A		
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) <p>Since the birth of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, American military strategy, foreign policy, and naval presence in East Asia, have all had a significant effect on the evolution of China's naval development, strategy, and maritime doctrine. This thesis will explore the roles, direct and indirect, the United States played in the development of China's maritime doctrine.</p> <p>China is quickly becoming a regional maritime power and will continue to be a significant factor in the strategic equation of the Western Pacific. The commonly held perception, that China is primarily a continental power, is no longer true as the Chinese navy and merchant marine fleet are today among the largest in the world. As China's national interests expand beyond the Asia-Pacific region, understanding the natural maritime component of those interests will be necessary in the evaluation of China's global aspirations and national strength.</p> <p>This research will be relevant in the assessment of China's maritime doctrine in the 1990s and will allow planners of the Asia-Pacific region to better understand China's often pragmatic approach to naval development and strategy. It will be up to the planners and strategists alike to build on this study and make their own interpretations and applications to policy-making as the future unfolds.</p>				
14. SUBJECT TERMS China's Naval History, American Influences on China's Navy, United States-People's Republic of China relations.		15. NUMBER OF PAGES * 125		
		16. PRICE CODE		
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)

Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

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**The American Factor In The Evolution Of China's Maritime Doctrine**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**


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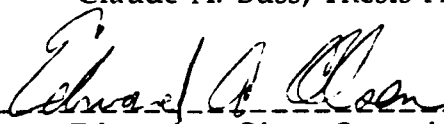
NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## ABSTRACT

Since the birth of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, American military strategy, foreign policy, and naval presence in East Asia, have all had a significant effect on the evolution of China's naval development, strategy, and maritime doctrine. This thesis will explore the roles, direct and indirect, the United States has played in the development of China's maritime doctrine. China is quickly becoming a regional maritime power and will continue to be a significant factor in the strategic equation of the Western Pacific. The commonly held perception, that China is primarily a continental power, is no longer true as the Chinese navy and merchant marine fleet are today among the largest in the world. As China's national interests expand beyond the Asia-Pacific region, understanding the natural maritime component of those interests will be necessary in the evaluation of China's global aspirations and national strength. This research will be relevant in the assessment of China's maritime doctrine in the 1990s and will allow planners of the Asia-Pacific region to better understand China's often pragmatic approach to naval development and strategy. It will be up to the planners and strategists alike to build on this study and make their own interpretations and applications to policy-making as the future unfolds.

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CRA&I	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>
DTIC	<input type="checkbox"/>
TAB	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unannounced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justification	
By	
Distribution/	
Availability Codes	
Dist	Availability or Special
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to take this opportunity to offer my sincere thanks to Doctor Claude Buss for his unfailing dedication to this cause. Without his continuous support and knowledgeable advice I would never have reached this point in the thesis process. I must not fail to acknowledge my wife, Dawn, for her never ending patience and understanding. Thank you both.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

China is the world's most populous country with emerging military and economic muscle that will make it a critical player in the international strategic balance. Perhaps because of its lack of seagoing tradition and historical naval weakness, the realization of China as a maritime power has not yet received the attention it deserves. The United States, as the world's only remaining superpower, stands to greatly impact the outcome of China's naval development in the future as it has in the past.

It is important to understand that China has had an impressive maritime history beginning with the voyages of Zheng Hu in the 15th century. Needless to say, the American factor had absolutely nothing to do with this earliest stage of Chinese naval history. The first American influences began to appear later with China's earliest confrontation with the ships of the West in the nineteenth century.

Between 1842 and 1949 China's naval incompetence resulted in the "barbarian" penetration from the sea. In large part due to its naval weakness, China was forced to acquiesce to Western demands to open trade ports. By 1949, with the fall of China, the end of Nationalist control over the mainland led to the formal establishment of Communist China (The People's Republic of China), and the People's Liberation Army/Navy (PLAN). All of the American sympathy, advise, and aid, went with the Nationalists to their new location on Formosa. The "American factor" would prove to have had an overwhelming impact on the development of the PRC's naval and maritime doctrines.



Between 1949 and 1953 the PRC's attitude became one of total opposition to the United States. The American factor in the form of assistance to the Republic of China (ROC), the US Seventh Fleet's presence in the Taiwan Strait, strong American anti-communist rhetoric, and finally, the US participation and overwhelming success in the Korean War, all contributed to China's feeling of opposition to, if not hatred for, the United States.

With the last years of Mao Zedong, and the re-establishment of relations with the United States, the American factor brought about an entirely new stage in Chinese naval development. However, China's continuous fear of being "encircled by imperialists" was heightened during this period by the escalation of US military action in Vietnam and the build up of Soviet forces along the Sino-Soviet land border. After China normalized relations with the United States, the PRC Navy began to take up its natural role in the Asia-Pacific by becoming the strongest tool in support of China's foreign policy. It was the reassessment of the American factor - the zigs and zags in relations with the United States - that would greatly influence the exponential growth in the strength of China's drive toward a blue water navy.

By far the most important event of the period from 1976-1989 was the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the PRC and the US in January 1979. The accomplishment and deficiencies of the PRC Navy, the onset of US-PRC strategic cooperation, and China's economic reforms, each contained a natural maritime component that was strongly influenced by the American factor and had a significant impact on China's naval development and maritime doctrine.

Changes in the international environment in the late 1980s and early 1990s, only intensified the impact of China's domestic crisis on Sino-American relations. The collapse of communism, first in Eastern Europe and then in the Soviet Union, only stood to reinforce the American tendency to perceive Beijing as a ruthless government. The collapse of communism intensified Chinese concerns about the future of their relationship with the United States.

As the Cold War gave way to a complex and evolving new world order, the Chinese felt obliged to deal continuously with the American factor. It was always the United States they perceived as their ultimate threat, and forced them to spend as much as they did in building their credible fleet. They could never consider entering any agreement on arms control - especially involving the navy - without weighing the capabilities and policies of the United States.

While China's navy is very much in transition and remains predominately a coastal fleet, most East Asians still want an American military presence to remain deployed in the region as insurance against the uncertainties of the late 1990s. In general it is safe to say that the risk of naval conflict in the region is quite low for now, however, latent security fears still exist. China remains determined to see to 't that its historical territorial waters remain under its control. The American factor has been and will continue to be the major determinant in the development of China's maritime doctrine.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the birth of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, American military strategy, foreign policy, and naval presence in East Asia, have all had a significant effect on the evolution of China's naval development, strategy, and maritime doctrine. This thesis will explore the roles, direct and indirect, the United States has played in the development of China's maritime doctrine.

China is quickly becoming a regional maritime power and will continue to be a significant factor in the strategic equation of the Western Pacific. The commonly held perception, that the PRC is primarily a continental power, is no longer true as the Chinese navy and merchant marine fleet are today among the largest in the world.\* As China's national interests expand beyond the Asia-Pacific region, understanding the natural maritime component of those interests will be necessary in the evaluation of China's global aspirations and national strength.

After a two-part introduction on China's maritime and naval history focusing from 907-1842, and on foreign imperialism from 1842-1949, this historical analysis will be broken down into six major periods beginning in 1949 with the emergence of Communist China. The six distinct periods will be characterized by the changes in US - PRC relations from 1949-1993. Each segment will assess the strength of the "American factor" and its influence on

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\* At the time of this study (late 1993), the growing Chinese Navy is the world's third largest naval fleet and the Chinese merchant marine is currently ranked fourth in total number of ships. [1993 Maritime Administration Report]

each significant change in China's maritime doctrine and naval development.

This research will be relevant in the assessment of China's maritime doctrine in the 1990s and will allow planners of the Asia-Pacific region to better understand China's often pragmatic approach to naval development and strategy. In each of the six periods, the "American factor" will be discussed and shown to have had a significant impact on China's evolving maritime policy. It is inevitable that the policy maker will wonder when the sixth period (1993 and beyond) will end and what the characteristics of the period that follows might be. It will be up to the planners and strategists alike to build on this study and make their own interpretations and applications to policy-making as the future unfolds.

#### **A. CHINA'S MARITIME AND NAVAL HISTORY (907-1842)**

China's maritime epoch began sometime in the early eighth century. It was around this time that pressures on China's internal population caused an extensive migration of people away from the north, down the Yangzi River to the sea, and southward along the coast.\*

The evolution of maritime China took a big leap forward sometime around the fall of the Tang dynasty in 907 A.D. During the four dynasties that followed - the Song (960-1279 A.D.), the Yuan or Mongol (1279-1368 A.D.), the Ming (1368-1644 A.D.), and the Qing (1644-1912 A.D.) - sea travel, ocean trade,

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\* Virtually all of this introduction, China's Maritime and Naval History (907-1949), relies heavily on Bruce Swanson's, Eighth Voyage Of The Dragon. I have attempted to cover over 1,000 years of naval and maritime history, up to the founding of The People's Republic of China, in as few pages as possible while giving justice to those matters which will be pertinent later in this text. Any information which could be considered as historical fact has generally been left uncited. Where Swanson's opinions or analysis are used in this study, of course, the appropriate citation is referenced.

and the introduction of foreign ideas (not to mention foreign "imperialism"), all made their own distinct contributions to China's naval thinking.

In 1127 A.D., the ruling dynasty, the Song, was forced to flee the inland capital at Kaifeng, because of warfare in the north with the Han Chinese, and reestablish its rule south of the Yangzi River Valley. The new capital, Hangzhou, a minor port city on the East China Sea, was where the Song set about controlling the coast and the Yangzi River, as an economic and military defense, against the rebellious nomads to the north. For the first time in China's long history, the sea became a new frontier for those who dared to conquer it.

It was during the early Ming period that seven awesome voyages between 1405-1433 A.D. were authorized and Chinese seapower, though short lived, began. Sea travel took the Chinese southward, into the Indian Ocean, and on to the east coast of Africa. However, almost as quickly as it began, the voyages were terminated.

The first Ming emperor (1368 A.D.), Hung-wu, had contact with many men who had knowledge of the sea, but his primary concern was making China's borders and cities safe from Mongol invasion. On the coast, Hung-wu had to deal with problems of piracy by the Japanese and others. In response, he ordered a halt to merchant shipping, declared sea travel and going overseas illegal, and punished those who attempted such actions as traitors with swift execution. Hung-wu also directed the undertaking of an extensive canal system, which upon completion was to replace the pirate-plagued sea routes.

Hung-wu, in trying to reestablish the long accepted tributary system under his rule, ordered sea-borne missions to the peripheral states, including Japan, Korea, and Annam (Vietnam). These missions were sent to proclaim that all who wished to enter into relations with China, the Middle Kingdom, must first acknowledge the official position and power of the new emperor. These missions also served to inform the new Chinese dynasty with information on the situations in the border areas.

Tribute missions soon came in from these states, and from others to which Mongol expeditions had been sent almost a century earlier, on the established routes of China's overseas trade. The relationship between the ruler of China and the rulers of other countries expressed the traditional "culturalism" in which China was assumed to be not only the largest but the oldest among the states, and indeed, the source of their civilization. This tribute system was not seen as aggressive imperialism but rather, simply an expression of culturalism. If foreign rulers wished relations, and if they valued trade with China, they had to acknowledge the universal supremacy of the "Son of Heaven," China's emperor. The size and number of Chinese ships contributed to the awe with which the Middle Kingdom was regarded.

Tribute relations...also (had) many other aspects of interstate relations: the exchange of envoys and conduct of diplomatic relations, repatriation and extradition of persons, regulation of Sino-foreign trade, and special Chinese efforts at self-defense through intimidating, cajoling, or subsidizing foreign tribes and rulers. [Ref. 34, p 195]

In 1398, Hung-wu died and ultimately his fourth son, Chengzu, came to power in 1403 naming his throne Yongle, meaning "perpetual happiness." Yongle's ambition and leadership enabled him to work out a strategy that gained respect for Chinese power and enriched the imperial treasuries. Also

in 1403, Yongle reopened merchant shipping and built hostels to house tributary missions coming by sea. A system was devised whereby legitimate merchants were given trading passports so that pirates could hence forth be identified. This allowed the Chinese, Japanese, and other businessmen, to carry on the lucrative business of trade to and from China's ports.

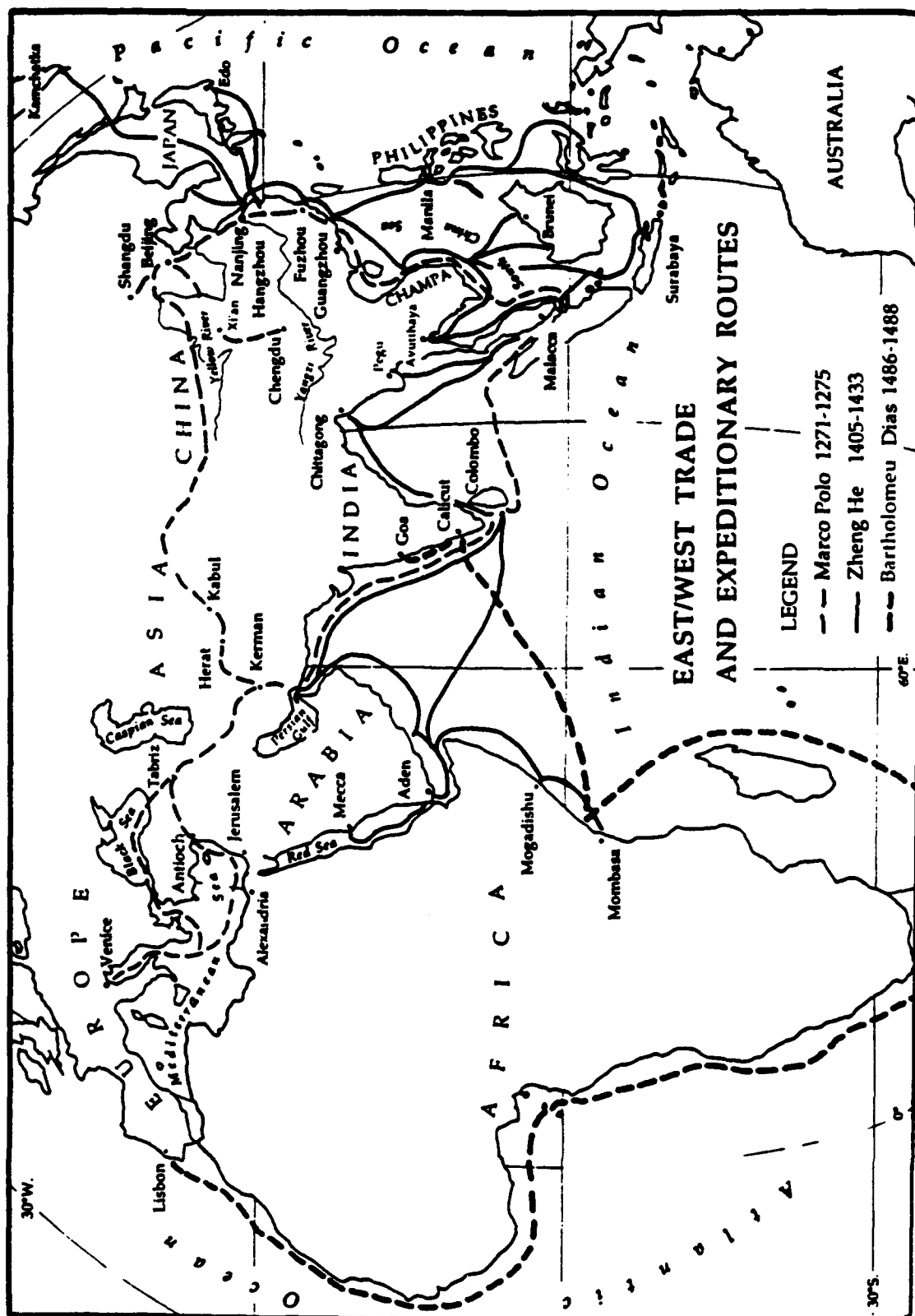
In 1405, during the reign of the Yongle emperor, a series of seven naval expeditions into the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean provided evidence that China was one of the world's supreme sea powers, with shipbuilding techniques and navigational abilities that were unsurpassed by any other nation. The aggressive shipbuilding effort that actually began in 1403, was responsible for the construction of over 2,000 large seagoing vessels during a period of the next 16 years. In addition to overseeing the building of the Ming fleet, Yongle selected senior officers who were to lead the Chinese expeditions. The man chosen to be the overall commander of the fleet was a Muslim eunuch named Zheng He. Being a Muslim he was deemed well fit to deal with the Islamic rulers of South Asia.

The sea routes used by the Ming naval captains had been in existence since the Song dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) and were divided into two major sea lanes: the East Sea Route and the West Sea Route; each of which was subdivided into a major and a minor route. The major East Sea Route, for example, took the fleet to Java and southern Borneo, while the major West Sea Route visited ports in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, and was the route taken to the Indian Ocean via the Straits of Malacca.\*

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\* See map, following page: East/West Trade And Expeditionary Routes. [Ref. 17 p 46]

Source: Pacific Century. p 46





The first naval expedition which got under way in 1405, included an estimated 317 ships, and reached the shores of India, as did the second and third expeditions. The family records of Zheng He best indicated the size of these undertakings:

The men of the expedition included 7 imperial eunuchs as ambassadors, 10 eunuchs as assistant ambassadors, 10 junior eunuchs, 53 eunuch chamberlains, 2 chief military directors, 93 military directors, one senior secretary of the Revenue Ministry, 2 masters of ceremony or protocol from the Honglusi (Department of State Ceremonials) for the audience of foreign ambassadors, one master and 4 assistant geomancer "meteorologists," 128 medical officers and assistants, 26,803 military, braves, "regular" officers, soldiers, reservists, cooks, purveyors, and clerks - in all 27,000 men. [Ref. 1, pp 37-38]

On the return voyage from India, the large military contingent played an important role. When Zheng arrived and went ashore in Sumatra he received reports of a pirate chieftain who had repeatedly robbed foreign merchant ships. In a series of sea and land battles, the pirate forces lost 5,000 men, and Zheng captured the pirate leader and transported him back to China where the emperor promptly had him executed.

Another example of Zheng's effective use of military force took place on the fourth voyage, this time in northern Sumatra. Tribal leaders there were fighting over whose king was the rightful ruler. Zheng interceded on behalf of the king who had rendered tribute in previous years to earlier expeditions. Zheng He's forces also saw combat during the third and fifth expeditions where his "marines" fought several violent battles. Another important duty of Zheng's was to bring back a wide variety of items to the imperial court, some of which included: jewels (sapphires, rubies, and

diamonds); animals (lions and horses) and; exotic food (dates, almonds, raisins, and apples).

...Overall, they (Zheng's expeditions) were highly successful diplomatic missions whose size and sophistication created awe in foreign ports. It should be stressed that they were not missions of conquest and plunder but of commerce and trade. A special concern of the expeditions, in fact, was the securing of the Malacca Strait through which valuable commerce passed to and from China. [Ref. 17, p 42]

The world to date had never seen such a large, and successful, undertaking of sea travel and masterful seaworthiness. These Chinese armadas sailed the Indian Ocean to Africa almost a century before the Portuguese (1498), and 150 years before the Spanish Armada (1588) sailed around England. China's seagoing junks were over 400 feet long, had four decks, up to 12 watertight compartments, and navigated by compass. The typical number of permanent ships' company was about fifty, including a compliment of approximately thirty marines.\*

During the course of the Ming expeditions several factors led to a decrease in public interest in maritime affairs. In 1411 the Grand Canal which had been damaged by flood and warfare years earlier was reopened. Why transport tribute by sea when the Grand Canal was available? The center of Chinese population shifted back inland, away from the coast. The continuing Mongol raids along the northern land border demanded imperial attention. Naval policy was a less attractive field of operation for corrupt government bureaucrats, and finally, a new version of Confucianism, that was strongly influenced by Buddhism, resulted in a loss of interest in geomancy and maritime expansion.

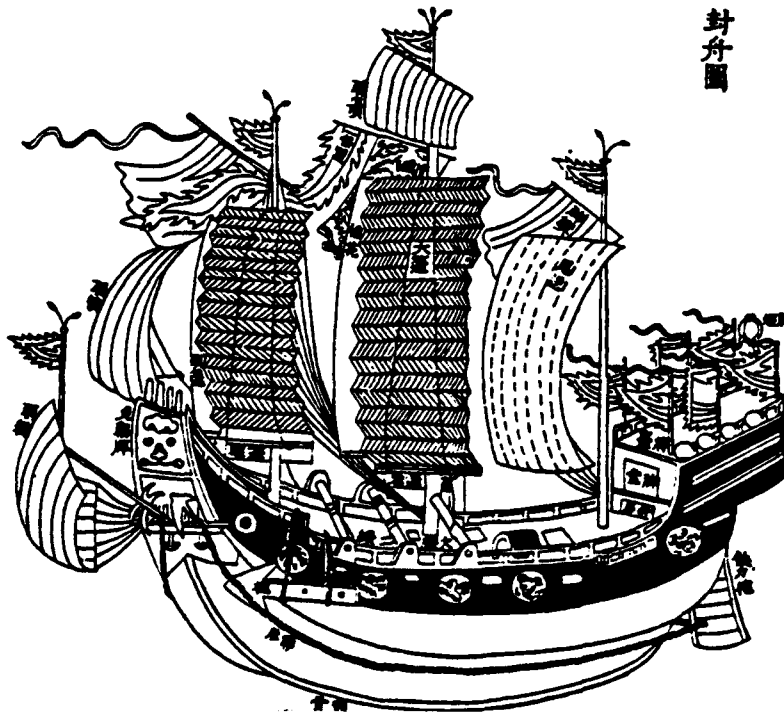
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\* See picture, following page: Chinese Maritime Innovations. [Ref. 17, p 45]

### CHINESE MARITIME INNOVATIONS

Critical to the success of China as a maritime power and global trader were its innovations in navigation and sailing. Among these were:

- The *magnetic compass*, in use by 1119, was probably noticed by Arab traders who subsequently introduced it to the Mediterranean world.
- An early version of the *sextant* called the "dipper-observer" was used in navigation along with the compass to track the Great Bear constellation.
- China's shipbuilders produced the *leeboard*, the *centerboard*, the *windlass*, and the *watertight compartment*, all of which were introduced by Arabs into the West.
- The *dry dock*—enabling extensive repair and maintenance of a great Song fleet—did not appear in Europe until centuries later.
- Warship construction included *paddle-wheel ships*, operated by treadmill, with up to eleven wheels per ship.
- *Weather forecasting*, primarily with respect to wind shifts, was based upon seasonal and weather signs.



It can be taken for granted that the basic reason for the absolute loss of interest in the sea was the great cost of such ventures. Although the early Ming emperors were not enamored with the idea of maritime expansion; they were obliged to put aside any glamorous maritime overtures when the imperial treasury was emptied by the expensive projects of defeating their enemies and building for themselves the spectacular capital city of Beijing.

On the threshold of becoming a great naval power that might have dominated the region, China's maritime interests faded at a time that directly coincided with European maritime expansion into Asia. The Ming fleets were quickly developing the capacity to bring military power and trade goods to any point in the Eastern seas. But after 1433, the Ming court sustained no interest in the possibilities of attaining seapower.

These triumphs of imperial navigation seem in retrospect to suggest that China might have been poised to become a great naval power that would dominate all of maritime Asia, but such was not to be the case. [Ref. 17, p 43]

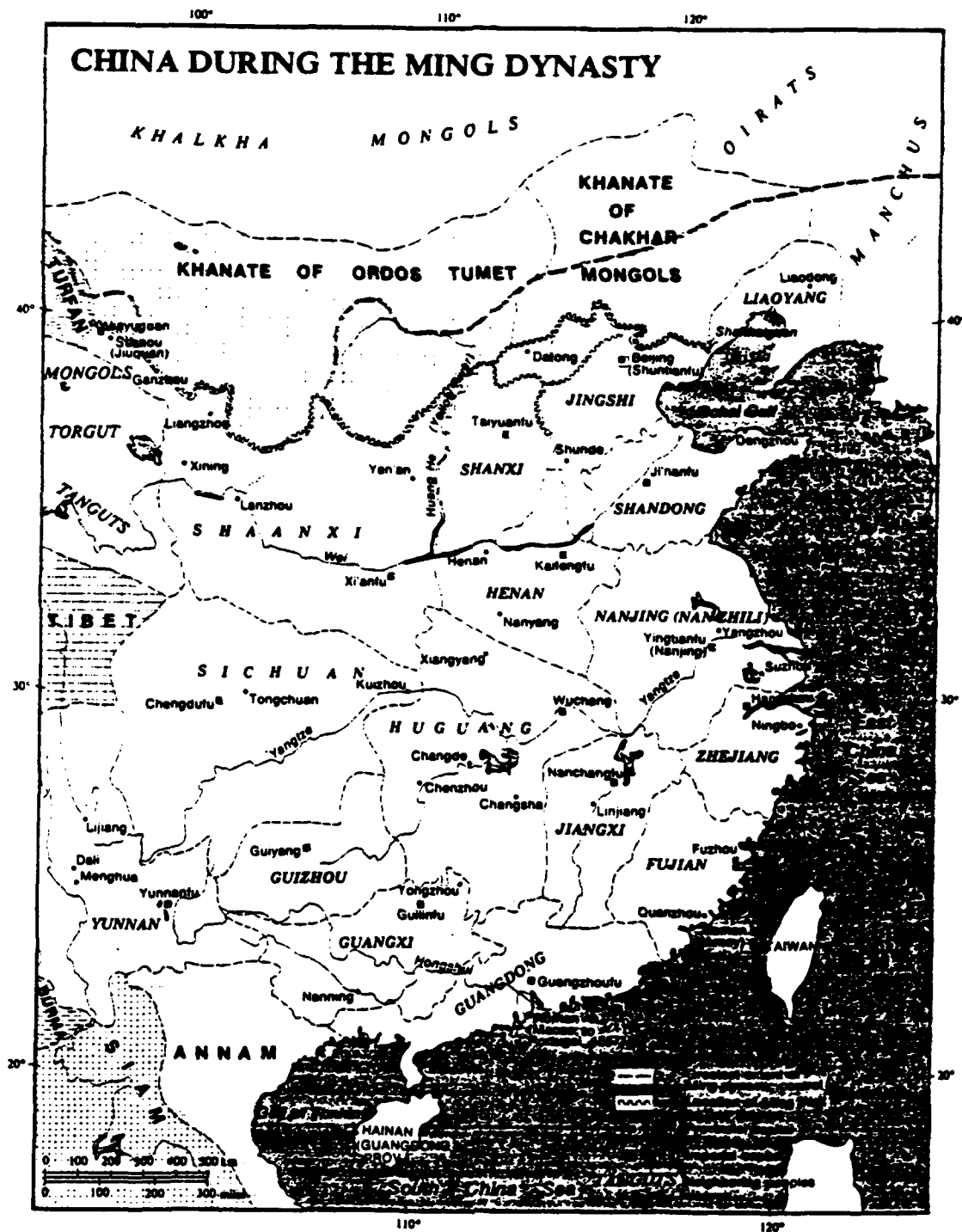
The sudden rise and subsequent rapid decline of officially sanctioned maritime activity during the Ming period exemplifies the overriding continentalist belief that has had a hold on China until very recent times. As the growing coastal population was attempting to use the sea to support its needs, the government was discouraging such practices. The collapse of the Ming empire in 1644 was brought about by the Manchus who had little interest in naval or maritime matters.\*

China's lack of interest in seapower might have had its origins in the strategic concept of *neiluan wailuan* ("inside disorder and outside calamity").

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\* See map, following page: China During The Ming Dynasty. [Ref. 17, p 44]

Source: Pacific Century, p 44



*Neiluan waihuan* considered internal rebellion and foreign aggression across the northern borders to be the two things that most threatened ruling dynasties. In addition to the above literal translation, the Chinese had an interpretation concerned with the strategy of defending against these dual threats. It translates simply as "internal weakness invites invasion from without." It is in this context that the Chinese concept of *neiluan waihuan* closely resembles the modern idea of defensive strategic deterrence where; potential enemies had to be convinced that Chinese military forces would respond to aggression with "unacceptable counteraction." [Ref. 1, p 55]

This concept made for strong attitudes among the military forces. Imperial naval strategists following these ideas pursued a policy of maritime defense known as *haifang* (sea protection). The Chinese believed that the best way to deal with the enemy who came by sea was to place naval defense forces in and around key areas like, the river approaches, major harbors, and the larger offshore islands. Thus making naval strategy defensive and coastal in nature, not aggressive and ocean going. It was not until relatively recent times that terms like "seapower" and "high-seas fleet" became common vocabulary for Chinese military and naval strategists.

Probably the most significant weakness of China's imperial navies was the lack of a central agency to handle the management of naval affairs. Without a naval minister, members of high civil office were often appointed to act on the emperor's behalf when a maritime crises arose. [Ref. 1, pp 56-57] During China's first millennium, navies were river and canal defense forces. In the Song period, riverine warfare was extended to the coastal region as the Mongols pressed down from the north.

In Ming and Manchu China, naval officers were of two distinct types: idealistic senior commanders and career officers. The idealistic commanders were usually appointed by the emperor during periods of crisis. The career officer was either a "conformist," mildly corrupt and subordinate, or an "opportunist," often manipulative yet energetic and ambitious. Neither type had any extensive classical education but both sought rank and prestige. [Ref. 1, pp 62-63]

Needless to say the American factor had absolutely nothing to do with this, the earliest stage of Chinese naval history. The first American influences began to appear later with China's earliest confrontation with the ships of the West in the nineteenth century.

#### **B. NAVAL HISTORY & FOREIGN IMPERIALISM (1842-1949)**

In spite of certain limited success, Chinese shipbuilding and naval tactics were hopelessly antiquated and out-gunned when compared to the British. By the end of the eighteenth century, after their defeat in the Opium War, the Chinese were forced to sign a treaty aboard the British ship *Cornwallis* anchored at Nanjing (29 August 1842). There was no American participation in the first fights between the British and the "modern" Chinese navy. The treaty was significant however, because it represented the first in a series of "unequal treaties" that China would have to sign under the threat of Western seapower. In large part due to its naval weakness, China lost the Opium Wars and was forced to acquiesce to Western demands to open trade ports. In the words of Bruce Swanson,

It became alarmingly evident that China's naval stagnation had resulted in barbarian penetration from the sea. The ocean no longer served as an extension of the Great Wall. [Ref. 1, p 72]

Of course the Americans, through most favored nation, derived the same advantages as the British in this newly created unequal treaty system. Furthermore, the American naval presence was duly noted by the Chinese as they negotiated their separate treaty with the Americans at Whampoa in 1849.\*

Britain's defeat of China had led to an important shift in the attitude of the emperor toward naval reform. He believed that if warships had to be built along Western designs to be effective, and if they could not be built all at once, they should be purchased. In 1861, after another disastrous war with the British and the French, the Chinese planned to purchase eight steam driven warships from Britain, which was clearly the most advanced of the foreign naval powers. The major flaw in this plan was that the British stipulated that the squadron, and its commander in chief, be commanded by a European. Needless to say, the Chinese refused this announcement and the warship purchase was canceled. By this time, American-built clipper ships began to make a deep impression on the Chinese.

In the summer of 1866, a five year contract with the French and English called for the building of a shipyard and a naval academy. Sixteen ships were to be constructed and a European staff was to be responsible for training Chinese workers and midshipmen. The Fuzhou naval complex (shipyard and academy) was divided into a French school and an English school. The French taught naval construction, design and an apprentice school, while the English taught theoretical navigation, practical navigation and engine-room

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\* The Chinese had their first taste of American naval power during the fighting in north China. In the "Blood is thicker than water" incident, the American ships, though neutral, took up positions decidedly favorable to the British.



operations. In June of 1869, the Fuzhou shipyard launched its first ship, the *Wannianqing*, a wooden sloop 68 meters in length with several 14-cm guns. Over the next four years the shipyard built 11 more ships of various sizes, including two gunboats, each 52 meters long, and the *Fupo*, a 1,258-ton transport ship. These Chinese attempts at naval modernization was considered a monumental achievement at the time. The Americans were not yet in position to participate in the Chinese naval development schemes.

In 1874 the main threat to China was Japan, a neighbor with naval potential. It was generally believed that if the Chinese were to catch up to the rapidly modernizing Japanese, an extensive program of foreign naval purchases would be necessary. Between 1875 and 1879, China received the first of four iron gunboats from Britain. In addition to the naval purchase program, China began to expand its recruitment of Western naval experts (still no Americans) to train the navy, and in 1885, China at long last established a central office to handle naval affairs.

Despite the establishment of the Navy Office, China's fleets remained severely limited and disjointed, and had failed to create an effective naval force. One factor was the \$4 million naval budget, as it was an attractive target for corrupt government officials. At the absolute apex of the imperial corruption was the empress Dowager who, between 1889 and 1894, diverted an estimated \$12 million from the navy for a Summer Palace and a marble boat. As testimony to the excesses of the late Manchu period, the marble boat remains anchored at the bottom of a lake. The simple fact that the empress was more concerned with the excesses of her court than the building of a

navy, quite possibly contributed to the devastating defeat of the China in the Sino-Japanese War. [Ref. 1, pp 97-99]

This late Ching naval effort was starved by the court, which decided instead to build up the new Summer Palace northwest of Peking as a retreat for the Empress Dowager on her retirement in 1889. The famous marble barge in the big lake there epitomizes this story. [Ref. 34, p 622]

In September of 1894, after the onset of the Sino-Japanese War, while the Chinese fleet was at anchor off the mouth of the Yalu River in the northern Yellow Sea, Chinese crews spotted a large Japanese fleet heading toward their anchored naval units. As the Chinese hurried to get underway, the Japanese efficiently took up formation and prepared for battle. As the two fleets closed each other, the Japanese patiently held their fire until they had closed to about 3,000 yards. At this time, the Japanese opened fire from their many rapid firing guns and shortly thereafter the entire Chinese fleet had sustained serious damage. In the aftermath of this naval battle, the Chinese crews sustained over 600 deaths, while the Japanese lost only 78 men. Every Chinese ship had been damaged or sunk while the entire Japanese fleet escaped sustaining only minimal damage. One post-action assessment (of the naval battle at Yalu) by a US Navy observer reported that the Chinese lost the battle largely due to their "(naval) incompetence." [Ref. 1, p 110]

When the Japanese navy unexpectedly defeated Li's Peiyang fleet off the Yalu in September 1894, it upset the power balance both within China and internationally. ...Japan's victory had worldwide repercussions and inspired a rivalry among imperialist powers competing to expand at China's expense. [Ref. 34, p 623]

As a result of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), and after the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in August of 1895, many Chinese believed that the best way to insure coastal security was to give the task to Russia through a

secret naval treaty. This proposal, which was denied by the emperor, is noteworthy because 55 years later it would serve as the basis for Sino-Soviet naval cooperation. There was still no record of the Chinese seeking help or advice from the United States.

Following Japan's naval defeat of Russia at Tsushima in 1905, the Chinese, impressed with Japan's victory, saw Japanese naval assistance to China as a possible means to free themselves from European commercialism. In 1907 and 1908, China began to conduct naval business with the Japanese shipyard at Kawasaki when they accepted shipment of four torpedo boats.

At the same time, the Japanese were trying to build a controlling position in China's plans for a new navy. By 1909 Japanese naval influence had increased and in that year, eight Chinese naval officers were sent to the Naval Gunnery School at Yokosuka. Furthermore, it was agreed that a select number of Chinese midshipmen would be admitted annually to Japanese naval schools. One complication with Japan's naval aid however, was that Japan was interested in the discovery of phosphate deposits on several of the islands in the South China Sea. These islands are now known as the Paracel and Spratly Islands. In 1907 China sent a naval expedition to the disputed islands to survey and reclaim them for the Chinese government. In 1910 China issued annexation announcements for each of the islands and in the face of Chinese determination, the Japanese removed their men and equipment. [Ref. 1, pp 120-123]

Foreign interest in the Chinese navy did not end with the Japanese, as the British and, for the first time, the United States, were also aggressively pursuing Chinese naval contracts. American naval capability and naval

doctrine took on an entirely new dimension after Admiral Mahan and the American acquisition of the Philippines. At last the Americans had a navy that could put teeth in their determination to plunge deeper into the China market.

In 1910, Chinese officials arrived in San Francisco for a two-week visit. They met with President Taft and took tours of the United States Military Academies at Annapolis and West Point. During the visit the Chinese officials signed a contract with Bethlehem Steel. The contract included money for Bethlehem Steel to improve existing gun and arsenal facilities; construction of new port facilities and new shipyards and; money for both ships and guns. On 9 February 1911, these plans were officially approved but it was too late as China was in the beginning of a revolution during which most of the warships, that had been acquired from the Japanese between 1907 and 1910, defected to the side of the revolutionaries.

In spite of fragmented loyalties in the aftermath of the revolution, the Chinese navy retained some order and discipline. A promotional system remained in effect throughout this period and even if an officer defected, he maintained his rank and pay and was seldom punished if he later chose to return. Perhaps because of this, the navy continued to place more importance on position rather than rank. As a result, the position as a commanding officer of a ship afloat was more highly prized and carried greater prestige than that of a staff position.

The naval ships inherited by the Republic between 1911 and 1912 were small in number but not too outdated. These ships were divided among three squadrons. The First Squadron had four cruisers, all in good working

order, while the Second Squadron contained mostly river gunboats which were quite old and of little value. The Third Squadron was a training squadron and had six of the newest ships from the United States (the *Feiyang*), Great Britain (the *Chenghe* and *Yingrui*) and Germany (three destroyers).

From 1912 to 1937, the rapidly changing world had survived World War I, the Washington Naval Conference and the rapidly developing confrontation of World War II. China maintained six naval schools and two shipyards that often functioned quite effectively. Also during this period, China was distinctly aware that the United States had potentially become the strongest naval power in the world. Furthermore, China's diplomatic destiny became hitched to the American star. While the revolution had successfully thrown out the Manchus, the treaty countries remained and continued to enjoy special privileges and the rights of extra-territoriality. The principal foreign powers in China were, Great Britain, Russia, Germany, Japan, and of course, the United States.

At this point, the naval connection between China and the United States became more manifest. The principal American agent in China was the US naval attaché, Commander Gillis. Gillis had been instrumental in the Bethlehem contract (1911), and in 1912 he was sent to Beijing with instructions to continue his assistance to American firms. In 1915, the Chinese approached Gillis with a proposal for the United States to sponsor Chinese officers to go to America to observe the manufacturing and operation of US submarines. Gillis managed to arrange a visit for the Chinese to the Electric Boat Company in Connecticut, and the US Navy Department began to study the advantages of training the Chinese. In 1916, as the political

situation in China deteriorated, those involved in the submarine plan lost interest and the idea was canceled. China's participation in World War I did not produce any significant effect on its naval development.

The Washington Conference (November 1921 - February 1922), among other things, produced a series of settlements that had important maritime implications for the Pacific. These included:

1. The Four Power Treaty which called for the abolishment of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.
2. The Five Power Treaty. A naval agreement that limited capital ship construction to a 5:5:3 ratio for Britain, the United States, and Japan. Both America and Britain agreed to no further naval base development east of Singapore or west of Hawaii.
3. The Japanese agreed to withdraw from Shandong and the northeast Asian mainland.
4. A Nine-Power Treaty that recognized the "Open Door," and the territorial and administrative integrity of China.

While on the surface these agreements seemed favorable for China, they managed to all but destroy any Chinese hopes of acquiring US naval aid. American attention had to be shifted elsewhere. In May 1922, US Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes, stated that the United States had no intention of honoring the Bethlehem contract or providing naval assistance to China. In the words of then chief of Far Eastern Affairs, John Van Antwerp MacMurray, this was because,

China was a country in turmoil and nearly bankrupt, and America had no business lending millions of dollars to provide funds for the naval clique to squander in playing for position with the strong military factions (in China). [Ref. 1, p 151]

Commander Gillis reportedly responded that, with this action the US had deprived itself of any and all opportunity to shape the Chinese Navy.

Any attempt by the US Navy to involve itself in Chinese naval affairs had to be postponed until after World War II. [Ref. 1, pp 151-152]

As World War II approached, hostilities with Japan and the Communists prevented any plans of naval rebuilding. The Kuomintang leader, Chiang K'ai-shek, did manage to recruit 1,000 men to form the nucleus for a post-war navy. Both the British and the United States showed interest in this activity. During this period, the United States maintained a naval attaché in Beijing, conducted many port visits, and kept its river fleet on the Yangzi to demonstrate its profound interest in Chinese naval development.

After the war ended, British involvement in Chinese naval affairs increased, and after Germany surrendered in Europe, the United States approved the transfer of eight warships to China.\* They included: two destroyers, four minesweepers, and two patrol craft escorts. At the same time the Chinese sent over 1,000 officers and enlisted men to the United States for naval training, 25 of which went to Annapolis and 24 to Massachusetts Institute of Technology for technical training.

Following the Japanese surrender in August of 1945, the Nationalist government signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance in Moscow after several weeks of meetings with Stalin and the Soviet Foreign Minister. The treaty pledged mutual respect for each country's sovereignties and mutual noninterference in their internal affairs. From a naval standpoint, the treaty committed China to declare Dalian and Port Arthur free

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\* Between 1945 and 1949, China received a total of 271 World War II surplus ships from the United States. Britain and Canada provided another 15 ships and an additional 33 were transferred from Japan as war reparations. [Ref. 2, p. 7]

ports, "open to commerce and shipping of all nations." The American navy had been too preoccupied with fighting Japan to pay too much attention to its future with China. All the time, however, while hostilities raged at sea, America kept its connections with Chungking intact by means of submarines landing on the China coast. Full scale operations were conducted by SACO (the Sino American Cooperative Organization) in spite of the watchful eyes of the Japanese.

By late 1945, the Chinese Nationalists were increasingly preoccupied with the advances being made by the Communist forces in the north. As a result, the US Navy found itself a participant in an expanding civil war in spite of the official American policy that, "...the United States will not support the Central Government of China in a fratricidal war." [Ref. 1, p 171]

During this time virtually all Chinese naval operations were conducted as seaward extensions of ground operations. Further complications existed ashore at the Chinese Navy Headquarters as army officers headed the Bureaus of Personnel, Supply, and Procurement. Afloat, the problem of control was a considerable challenge as Nationalist ship after ship was defecting to the Communist side.

Since the Americans were providing all military advice to Chiang Kai-shek through an organization known as MAGIC (Military Advisory Group In China) its naval component naturally recommended building a system along American lines. They encouraged a situation in which the United States would be the preeminent force in Asia after Japan was defeated. They pointed out that the US naval system had proven itself to be superior to the Japanese in the battles of World War II, and assumed that superiority would continue.



As the Chinese Communists prevailed in the civil war, Chiang's naval officers hoped that Sino-American naval cooperation would be forthcoming to counter potential Soviet naval expansion in the Pacific. The Chinese were all too aware that the Soviets, through the Yalta Agreement, took control over the Kuriles\* from Japan and had acquired privileges in Dalian and Port Arthur from China.

As early as January 1947, in the major fighting that had erupted in northern China between the Nationalists and the Communists, it was clear that Communists were gaining the upper hand. As the pressures of warfare increased inland, the ineffective Nationalists Navy was heavily engaged in attempting to blockade shipping between the Liaodong and Shandong peninsulas. The Nationalists were severely limited however, as the Soviets refused to allow commercial shipping or Nationalist naval vessels to enter Dalian. The Americans were astopped from transporting Nationalist troops to Manchuria, which resulted in an American protest to the Soviet Union, but to no avail as the Soviets insisted that Dalian remain closed and under the administrative control of the Soviet government.

The aforementioned MAGIC, that had among its many duties to assist the Chinese in modernizing its shipyards and to advise the Chinese on anti-piracy and anti-smuggling operations, managed to bring about the transfer of 74 more ships to the Chinese fleet. These included: eight LSTs, six LSMs, seven LCIs, three LCTs, 25 LCMs, and 25 LCVPs, all left over vessels from the war in Europe (World War II). The U.S. decision was designed to prevent the

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\* The Kurile Islands were considered worth special attention as they stretch for 700 miles and Soviet possession of this island group made the Okhotsk Sea a "Soviet naval-lake". This greatly elevated the Soviet position as they were no longer isolated from the Pacific.

Communists from conquering Formosa and to limit the expansion of Soviet activities in northeast China.

The MAGIC at Nanjing also helped to create the Chinese Department of Naval Affairs which was a mirror image of the US Navy Headquarters. In addition to the earlier three squadrons of the Chinese navy, a fourth squadron was established. This squadron was a Transport Squadron and was responsible for shipping supplies to the three other squadrons of the Chinese Navy.

In the midst of a collapsing government on the mainland, as Nationalists ships and sailors alike were defecting to the Communist side, Chiang K'ai-shek spent time aboard the cruiser *Chongqing* observing the worsening military situation along the coast. As the military disasters accumulated, the Nationalist retreat increased. In January 1949, Chiang K'ai-shek retired as president of the Republic and within two weeks, Beijing fell to the Communists. The Kuomintang government transferred itself from Beijing to Canton, as the Communist Third Army built up along the northern bank of the Yangzi River. Also during this period, the US Navy Advisory Division and the Chinese naval units at Qingdao began to withdraw to Taiwan and Xiamen. [Ref. 1, p 180] While all this was taking place, the United States Navy was obliged to remain inactive.

In early April 1949, officers at the Chinese Navy Headquarters had at long last realized that the lack of unity in their command structure would cause even more ships to defect to the Communists. On 20 April 1949, the Second Squadron\* was ordered up the Yangzi river in an attempt to stop the

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\* There were four naval squadrons in the Chinese fleet, the Third Squadron was a training fleet and the Fourth Squadron was a transport fleet designed for resupply.

Communists from crossing. The squadron was promised decoration and financial reward if successful. Faced with possible annihilation in the face of the overpowering Communist forces along the river, the entire squadron defected, taking with it a total of 18 ships and over 1,200 trained sailors. One destroyer, three destroyer escorts, one patrol gunboat, five landing craft, and eight smaller auxiliaries, defected.

This horrendous action was the last use of Kuomintang naval forces in the civil war except as a means to evacuate the Nationalist forces to Taiwan. The end of Nationalist control over the mainland led to the formal establishment of Communist China (The People's Republic of China), and the People's Liberation Army/Navy (PLAN). All of the American sympathy, advise, and aid, went with the Nationalists to their new location on Formosa. So far as mainland China - the PRC - was concerned, American loyalties, influence, and presence, from this point on would be positive for Taiwan and negative for the Communist regime. That "American factor" would have an overwhelming impact on the development of the PRC's naval and maritime doctrines.

## **II. OPPOSITION TO THE UNITED STATES: 1949-1953**

It is important to note here that by no means did the entire Nationalist navy evacuate to Taiwan. Most of the personnel that had been sent to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s were committed to the establishment of a strong Chinese navy and knew this would not be possible under the Nationalist regime. The many defections that were at least partially responsible for the demoralization of the Kuomintang government, managed to form the nucleus of the navy for the People's Republic of China.

Meanwhile in Taiwan, under the protection of the US Seventh Fleet, the Republic of China's (ROC) Navy spent this period (1949-1953) rebuilding and reorganizing itself into a combat force. The old Military Advisory Group in China (MAGIC), was reinstituted as JUSMAG (Joint United States Military Advisory Group) by the United States in May 1951. Hundreds of newly-appointed US naval advisors assisted in obtaining ships and supplies while advising the ROC Navy on operations, training, logistics, and intelligence.

Of course the PRC's attitude became one of total opposition to the United States at this time. Between 1949 and 1953, several factors, including: American assistance to the Republic of China (ROC), the US Seventh Fleet's presence in the Taiwan Strait, strong American anti-communist rhetoric, and finally, the US participation and overwhelming success in the Korean War, all contributed to feelings of opposition to, if not hatred for, the United States. These factors will be discussed in this chapter showing the growing

importance of the American factor in the development of the Chinese navy and its operating maritime doctrine.

## **A. THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRC NAVY**

The initial development of Chinese Communist naval forces stems from its foundation in late 1945 when Soviet forces occupied Manchuria. The Soviets seem to have been the driving force in the first significant moves toward the establishment of Communist China's naval force. However, at this time the US Seventh Fleet had effectively sealed off the Chinese coast from any significant Soviet naval operations.

After the civil war approached its climax in September 1949, Mao Zedong addressed the first session of the National Political Consultative Conference which laid the groundwork for the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). At this conference, Mao announced the new (future) goals of the Chinese People's Liberation Army and Navy (PLAN).

Our national defense will be strengthened and we won't permit any imperialist to encroach any more upon our territory. Based on the gallant and tested People's Liberation Army, the people's armed forces of ours must be maintained and developed. We shall not only have a powerful army, but also a powerful air force and a powerful navy. [Ref. 1, p 183]

The goals of the new navy at this time according to the naval commander and political commissar, Zhang Aiping,\* were:

To build up a skeleton naval arm to be used as the basis for the creation of a powerful People's Navy of the future, in order to destroy the sea blockade of liberated China, to support the land and air forces of the PLA

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\* Zhang Aiping was an army general by profession, but as commander of the navy, he convened a naval planning conference where by, "...organization and regularization of the new naval force, political reeducation of the many former ROC naval personnel, repair of damaged or deteriorating ships and naval facilities, and the establishment of naval schools,..." were established as immediate goals. (Ref. 2, p. 14)

in defense of Chinese soil, and to wipe out all remnants of the reactionary forces. [Ref. 2, p 14]

Mao's early endorsement for building a navy was predicated on several real maritime threats: the Nationalists still occupied many offshore islands and Taiwan; Chiang K'ai-shek's navy controlled the sealanes to and from the mainland and; the U.S. Navy, just offshore, had the only significant naval force in the Western Pacific. In fact Mao, a staunch continentalist who had no real naval forces to speak of at the end of the civil war, cared little about the navy or the sea. Naval forces at this time were seen as a dubious commodity in defense of the coast.

In December 1949, two months after the founding of the PRC, Mao traveled to Moscow where he remained until February 1950. This visit produced the first provisions for Soviet naval aid and advice as was evidence by an increased Soviet naval presence in China following the Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance.

A Soviet Naval Advisory Mission was established in early 1950, when over 500 Soviet naval advisors arrived in China. Approximately 100 advisors were sent to the navy headquarters in Beijing while the remainder went to the Chinese fleet and support facilities. It has been reported that there were Soviet advisors on every staff and ship in the PRC Navy and as a result, Soviet naval thinking was applied in every possible circumstance. [Ref. 2, p 19]

China's advocates of naval expansion apparently wasted little time convincing Mao to seek naval aid and advice from the Soviet Union in building its own fleet. Virtually all naval construction during the first decade of the PRC Navy was undertaken with the guidance and assistance of the

Soviets. It is important to note that there were no significant naval accomplishments in the first year or so of Soviet aid however, China's desires to model its navy after the Soviets became evident in 1951, when the Chinese Navy Deputy Commander, Wang Hongkun, stated:

The Soviet Navy is an example for the Navy of the Chinese people and is the direction of construction of the Chinese People's Navy. We should learn from the great Red Navy in order to speed up the building of a powerful people's navy. [Ref. 1, p 193]

In the aftermath of the Communist victory on mainland China, President Truman's official policy was one of "noninterference." However, on 24 June 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea, and on the 27th of June, Truman reversed the US policy toward Taiwan with the following statement:

The occupation of Taiwan by Communist forces would be a direct threat to the security of the Pacific area and to the U.S. forces performing their lawful and necessary functions in the area. Accordingly, I have ordered the Seventh Fleet to prevent any attack on Formosa. As a corollary of this action, I am calling upon the Chinese Government on Formosa to cease all air and sea operations against the mainland. [Ref. 2, p 17]

Despite this official policy of the United States, the Nationalist in 1950 tasked their naval and air force units to interfere with Communist maritime activities whenever possible. [Ref. 1, p 185] While this order was in violation of the US neutralization policy, the Nationalists continued to carry out guerrilla raids against the Communist held islands and shipping traffic, bound to and from the mainland, virtually unopposed. The lack of any real action by the US Seventh Fleet against the Nationalists raids prompted the PRC government to brand the United States, "...a protector of Nationalist aggression." [Ref. 1, p 186]

The existence of a hostile Taiwan , supported by the powerful US Seventh Fleet, colored the development of the PRC Navy at least into the 1970s. [Ref. 2, p 18]

From 1950 to 1953, the Korean War had the full attention of the PRC and the PLA, which turned out to be significant in the development of China's navy. The war all but drained the available resources for military development, especially the funds for naval development. The Chinese Navy did not participate in the Korean War per se, but for their minimal part they did ferry some supplies to the Communist forces in North Korea. The war was also an intense learning experience which had a long term benefit for the People's Liberation Army/Navy (PLAN). For the Communist side at least, the Korean War was solely a land and air war, leaving the navy in abeyance. However, it was now understood that the only reason that the United States and the United Nations could fight in Korea was in a large way due to American seapower. Merchant shipping from the West had the protection of naval escorts, and US aircraft carriers off the Korean coast went unchallenged as they launched repeated air strikes against the Communist forces on North Korea. This would later serve to enhance the position of the Chinese naval advocates who believed it was necessary for the PRC to obtain a navy strong enough to prevent another country from violating China's territory.

Mao, extremely frustrated by the success of American sea power in the Korean War, equated the situation to Taiwan in mid 1950, when the lack of Chinese seapower kept the Chinese ground forces from winning the war. Mao is quoted to have stated that:

...Our failure to win a decisive victory in Korea is attributed to our poor naval force. In March 1951, I suggested to Comrade Stalin that the Soviet



Union should use her submarines in Asian waters, but he chose a cautious attitude for fear that it should give the capitalistic imperialists an excuse for expanding the war into the continent. [Ref. 2, p 20]

A top priority in the PLA Navy's long term plan was rapid modernization of naval bases and shipyards which required extensive outside aid and technology. In 1951 the first transfers of naval weapons and advisors from the USSR arrived in China, when about 50 World War II era torpedo boats were delivered.\* Soviet assistance was provided for under the terms agreed to by Mao and Stalin in Moscow (February 1950). United States intelligence reports indicated that,

...The Soviets believed building the PRC Navy was so important that they were willing sacrifice operational ships of their own for the Chinese cause. [Ref. 2, p 29]

As the Korean War was coming to a close, Mao was free to take a new look at his navy. Mao took an active interest in redefining the navy's responsibilities in December 1953 after over 90 incidents of Nationalist interference with international shipping destined for the PRC. He directed the navy to follow three strategic goals:

1. Eliminate Nationalist naval interference and thereby insure maritime safety in navigation and transport.
2. Participate in the recovery of Taiwan at an appropriate time.
3. Oppose imperialist aggression from the sea. [Ref. 1, p 186]

With this, a massive effort was begun to restore China's coastal defenses. This effort included building defensive positions around Qingdao

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\* In Bruce Swanson's Eighth Voyage of The Dragon, he notes John Gittings evidence that, "...Soviet penetration, particularly in the more technical fields, extends down to the lowest levels and smallest units of the Chinese Communist naval training organization." (Office of Naval Intelligence [ONI] Review, declassified [September 1951]).

and on the islands located in the sea approaches to the port there. Similar efforts were undertaken on the southern bank of the Yangzi River and in the south on the Pearl River. The new coastal defense system bore a strong resemblance to the coastal defense strategy of China's dynastic past. The strategic concepts from the Ming dynasty, known as *neiluan waihuan* and *haifang* meaning "inside disorder invites outside calamity" and "sea protection" respectively, seem to have been the basis for the new naval strategy. Again, the navy was designed to be defensive and coastal in nature, not aggressive and ocean going. [Ref. 1, p 187]

The positioning of the Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait severely limited any offensive action the PRC might have preferred to take in an effort to reclaim Taiwan. The Korean War, occurring when it did, deprived the PRC from victory in its own civil war and saddled the government for decades thereafter with an aggressively hostile challenge to its legitimacy firmly entrenched just offshore. [Ref. 2, p 18]

## **B. THE US - TAIWAN CONNECTION**

From the middle of 1950, while the Communists were engaging the help of the Soviets, the ROC Navy had begun operations in the coastal waters of the mainland. According to Lcdr. David Muller, USN, ten objectives were outlined to the Seventh Fleet's liaison officer in Taipei (October 1950). They were:

The ROC Navy intended to (1) blockade the deep-water ports of China; (2) engage and sink the major units of the PRC Navy; (3) attack all concentrations of junks; (4) land commandos to destroy coastal military installations and collect intelligence; (5) patrol and "ransack" coastal and island areas; (6) occupy certain islands for use as bases for the interdiction of coastal traffic; (7) keep ships on alert at forward bases for combat action as required; (8) conduct reconnaissance by means of naval or fishing

vessels; (9) defend the coasts and ports of Taiwan and the occupied offshore islands; and (10) blockade and seize PRC-occupied offshore islands. [Ref. 2, pp 20-21]

For the next decade the ROC Navy remained active in each of these areas. While the US Seventh Fleet was patrolling the strait, the ROC Navy was in no way capable of making any offensive attacks against the mainland. The PRC naval operations that occurred during this period were almost exclusively defensive in nature. The PRC naval ships and craft remained close to the coast and islands where they could receive fire support from the coastal artillery sites if necessary, and they generally tried to avoid confrontation with the Nationalists naval forces. [Ref. 2, p 21]

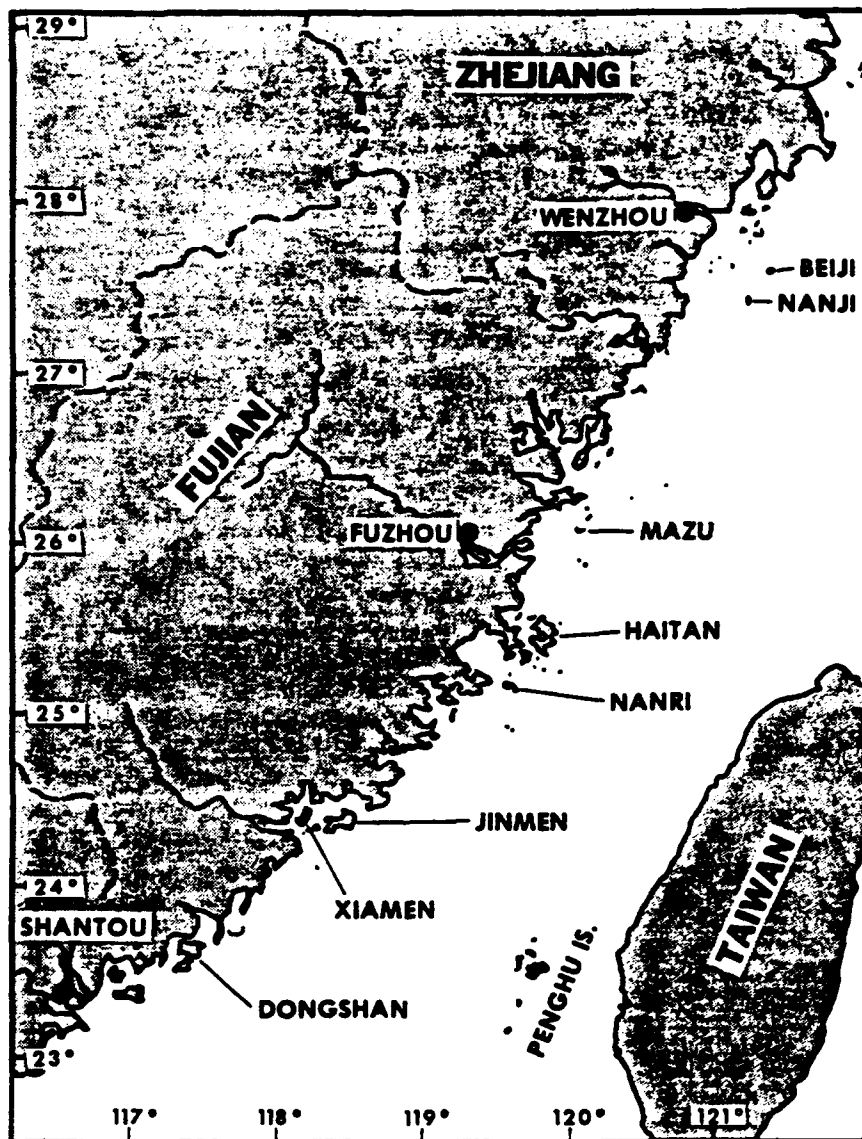
Hostilities in the strait had taken on a new light in August 1952 when the ROC recaptured three islands it had previously given up.\* October 1952 marked the beginning of extensive ROC campaigns to harass and ultimately recover many of the offshore islands in the strait area. In January 1953, the newly inaugurated President Eisenhower ordered the strait, "deneutralized" and at the time the move was described as having an "unleashing" effect for Chiang Kai-shek's forces. [Ref. 2, p 23] In effect, the American president's action greatly increased the alarm of the PRC.

While these annoying raids continued into 1954, no significant changes in the strategic balance between the PRC and the ROC took place. In December 1953, the US Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), assessed the situation in the strait as follows:

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\* The three islands were, Nanji and Beiji in the northern Taiwan Strait and Nanpeng in the south, near the port of Shantou. See map, following page: The Offshore Islands in the Taiwan Strait. [Ref. 2, p 22]

Source, China As A Maritime Power, p 22



Offshore islands in the Taiwan Strait

The PRC Navy, Air Force, and Army were now stronger in the strait area than their ROC counterparts, but seemed to be taking relatively little interest in the 25-odd offshore islands then held by ROC forces." [Ref. 2, p 23]

ONI suggested that this was in part due to the concerns of the Korean War, and that the coastal area facing Taiwan was isolated from the rest of China and could easily take second priority to the PRC's many other concerns. The situation in the offshore islands was about to change.

### III. THE COLD WAR PHILOSOPHY: 1953-1968

It was during this period that China exploded its first atomic bomb and Russia sent Sputnik into space. Both of these events diminished the almost supernatural awe with which most Chinese looked upon the military might of the United States. On 2 February 1953, the newly inaugurated President Eisenhower announced in his State of the Union Address that he was,

Issuing instructions that the Seventh Fleet no longer be employed to shield Communist China [from an attack by Nationalist forces]. While the President did say the order did not implied aggressive intent against "Red China," he also stated that, ...we [the United States] certainly have no obligation to protect a nation fighting us in Korea. [Ref. 3, p 64]

This announcement was commonly perceived as an "unleashing" of Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist forces from the limited and unsuccessful restrictions of the US Seventh Fleet, in effect giving Chiang a free hand to continue his attacks against the PRC's naval forces and the Communist held islands. At the time, a commentator described the president's announcement as "taking the girdle off" the Seventh Fleet.

Perhaps making tensions between the PRC and the US worse, on 6 February 1953, US Representative Dewey Short (R-Mo.), House Armed Services Committee chairman, reported that the President and his advisors were studying proposals for a naval blockade of Communist China. However, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the Joint Chiefs believed a blockade by the US alone might split the allies and bring on war with the Soviet Union; and that

the flow of US arms to the Chinese Nationalists on Formosa was "stepping up." [Ref. 3, p 64]

On 2 September 1953, (after the signing of the Korean armistice on July 27) Secretary Dulles warned Communist China that,

A renewal of the Korean conflict or a transfer of Communist forces into Indo-China might mean war against the mainland itself. The US had learned one lesson from the Korean conflict: If events are likely which will in fact lead us to fight, let us make clear our intentions in advance; then we shall probably not have to fight. [Ref. 3, p 65]

With these and other announcements the United States and the Soviet Union were setting the stage for the Cold War philosophies that would dominate the world's strategic balance for the next 40 years. At the same time, the PRC and the Soviet Union were strengthening a relationship, that would greatly impact the Chinese perceptions of the US, and would be the foundation for the development of the PRC Navy.

In the PRC, the United States was seen as the only major threat to Chinese security in this era. The American presence in East Asia was based largely on seapower, specifically the US Seventh Fleet, a formidable armed presence just off China's coast. The Chinese government believed that it was the US Navy that had kept the PLA from invading Taiwan in 1950 and in effect had prevented the Communist from complete victory in the civil war. Next, American seapower had played a key role in Korea, preventing a North Korean victory in the war and making possible the northward movement of the front to the Chinese border, thus bringing the PRC into a long and costly conflict. And to top it all, the Chinese were about to find out that US naval power would play a key role in the offshore island crisis of 1955 and in the

Jinmen crisis of 1958, frustrating long range Chinese strategic goals concerning Taiwan.

Perhaps on a larger scale, the PRC also saw a US threat directly to the east in America's limited rearmament of Japan; which was China's bitter enemy of earlier decades. US involvement in this regard led the PRC to describe the American policies in Japan, as responsible for the "revival of Japanese militarism." Furthering tensions, and adding fuel to the Chinese perception that the Americans had imperialist intentions, the US had military bases in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines. [Ref. 2, pp 46-47]

Between 1953 and 1968, as the Cold War intensified, the United States and the Soviet Union, although at opposite poles, showed that the policies of these two states were the dominate factors in the evolution of the Chinese navy. At the heart of this fact were, Soviet help to the PRC and the American commitment to the Nationalists in the offshore islands. Soviet help slacked off after the diplomatic split in 1960, and in the heady years of the Cultural Revolution the PRC had almost no energy to spare for naval affairs.

#### A. THE OFFSHORE ISLANDS

Within one year after the hostilities of the Korean War ended, the Chinese Communists actively resumed the civil war against the Nationalists. In early 1954 the PRC had been conducting only a "holding action" in the Taiwan Strait as it was heavily committed in Korea and could not afford to open a second front. The renewed war against the Nationalists began again on 3 September 1954 when the ROC occupied island of Jinmen was brought under heavy artillery fire from the mainland. In the last week of September 1954, it became obvious that the previous attack of Jinmen was in fact a



diversion and that the real focus of the PRC's aggression was further north in the strait, in the Dachen Island group. [Ref. 2, p 24]

The Dachen group consists of five major islands off the coast of Zhejiang Province, and are located 200 nautical miles north of Taiwan.\* These islands were the Nationalists' northernmost offshore outpost and functioned as the base for operations against the Zhejiang coast. Between 15 and 17 May 1954, several minor naval engagements took place in the Dachen area. While naval vessels on both sides were damaged, the PRC lost only one small gunboat. The US naval attaché in Taipei commented that the attacks represented, "...an increased willingness of the PRC naval forces to engage the Nationalists at sea." [Ref. 2, p 26]

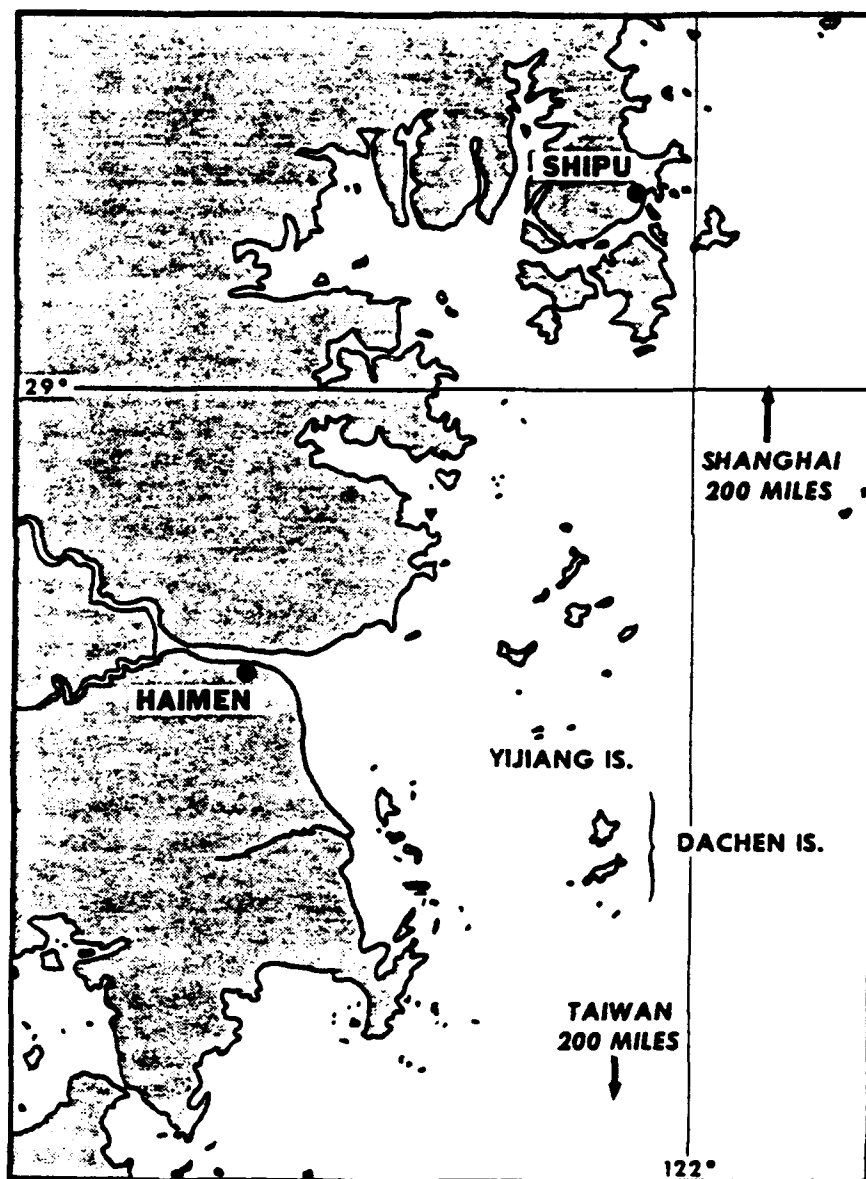
By February 1955, the Nationalists had lost control of the entire Dachen Island group and, the US Seventh Fleet was asked for assistance from Taipei in the evacuation of the remaining Nationalists forces. On the same day, US forces assisted the ROC in the withdrawal, in effect warned the PRC not to interfere. On 8 February 1955, the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov passed word to the United States from China that PRC forces would not fire on American ships unless they were attacked first.

Three important diplomatic events occurred during this period that had a lasting effect on events in the Taiwan Strait area. First, in seeking help from the US with the evacuation, the ROC also sought a commitment from the US to defend the more southerly offshore islands of Jinmen and Mazu. Second, on 29 January 1955, President Eisenhower signed the Formosa Resolution. He said adoption of the resolution was,

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\* See map, following page: Dachen Islands and vicinity. [Ref. 2, p 25]

Source, China As A Maritime Power, p 25



Dachen Islands and vicinity

...A step to preserve the peace in the Formosa area. We are ready to support a United Nations effort to end the present hostilities in the area, but we are also united in our determination to defend an area vital to the security of the United States and the free world. [Ref. 3, p 72]

Finally, on 9 February 1955, the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the US-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty, which guaranteed American protection of Taiwan and the mid-strait Penghu Islands, but stopped short of promising intervention in the event of an attack on the other offshore islands. The treaty required the United States and Nationalist China to:

1. Maintain and develop "jointly by self-help and mutual aid" their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack and Communist subversion directed against them "from without."
2. Cooperate in economic development.
3. Consult on implementation of the treaty.
4. Act to meet an armed attack "in the West Pacific area directed against the territories" of either the US or the Republic of China, including Formosa, the Pescadores Islands, and "such other territories as may be determined by mutual agreement." [Ref. 3, p 73]

Thus, although it had lost an important offshore island position, the ROC had gained an American commitment to its security against invasion from the mainland.

The offshore islands situation remained quiet while revolution raged in Central Europe. Then in the early summer of 1958, it had become apparent from the PRC troop movements opposite Jinmen that China had chosen the island as the focus for a renewed effort against the ROC offshore positions. Perhaps the Chinese judged that the Russians, after their difficulties in

Poland and Hungary, would at last become free to help the Chinese if needed. Furthermore, it would be good to test the heart and mind of Khrushchev, the new Russian leader. Naval deployments to the area began in July when a squadron of torpedo boats was transported by rail from its base in Shanghai to Xiamen, opposite Jinmen. At the same time, approximately 180 MiG-15s and 17s were positioned at five different airfields in the strait area. The first air battles took place on 14 August 1958.

As intelligence reports on the increased PRC activity came in, the US Seventh Fleet shifted its destroyer patrols from the Philippines into the Taiwan Strait in late July 1958. On 4 August, the aircraft carrier *Lexington* was ordered to the Taiwan area and, it arrived east of Taiwan on the 8th of August. On 22 August in response to heightened tensions, the US Chief of Naval Operations decided to position two additional carriers, with their escorts and support ships, off Taiwan.

On 23 August 1958, the PRC open fired with heavy artillery on Jinmen and increased their air patrols. US Pacific intelligence (CINCPAC) assessed the situation as follows:

An invasion of the offshore islands appeared imminent, with the only restraining element being the US Seventh Fleet and its capability to aid the Nationalists, if so ordered. [Ref. 2, p 35]

As it became evident that the confrontation would be a major one, on 23 August, the carrier *Essex* was ordered to leave its patrol in the Mediterranean and proceed at high speed to the Western Pacific. At the same time in Pearl Harbor, the carrier *Midway* was ordered to make ready for sea and proceed to the Taiwan area. On the 24th of August, the commander of the Seventh Fleet ordered his ships in the strait area to "escort and protect"

ROC Navy ships in international waters, but not to enter into battle unless in self-defense. [Ref. 2, p 36]

As the artillery fire from the PRC continued against the Nationalist held islands in August of 1958, the carrier *Hancock* and her escorts arrived off Taiwan. The following day, a third aircraft carrier, the *Shangri-La*, joined the *Lexington* and the *Hancock* in a large-scale air defense exercise in the area. The antisubmarine aircraft carrier *Princeton* arrived to support the three attack carriers on the same day. Also on 28 August, the carrier *Essex* transited the Suez Canal and *Midway* departed Pearl Harbor for the Western Pacific.

Only five days after the artillery barrage against Jinmen began, the US Navy had four aircraft carriers on station off the coast, with two more on the way. The carriers were all accompanied by their escort ships, plus a cruiser and 12 destroyers were present in the Jinmen area itself. The presence of this substantial armada, poised to bring extremely heavy firepower to bear against the Chinese forces ashore and afloat, could not but have had a sobering effect on the PRC government and military authorities. [Ref. 2, p 36]

Despite the overwhelming US presence in the area, the PRC maintained an effective blockade which prevented the ROC from getting supplies through to Jinmen.\* In light of the PRC's continued success, the US led its first resupply effort into territorial waters on 7 September 1958. In the meantime, the carrier *Midway* had arrived from Hawaii, making for a total of five US carriers in the region. The Chinese were in no way prepared or willing to fire on US ships for fear of inviting retaliation from the multiple-

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\* The US effort was not successful prior to this because they were not allowed inside territorial waters (3 nautical miles from any land). The PRC naval forces on the other hand steamed freely in and out of the 3 mile boundary, thus making any US attempts to prevent PRC interception of Nationalist resupply vessels impossible.

carrier task force. As a result, the resupply of Jinmen was allowed to take place and needless to say, the PRC's blockade had been broken.

While the crisis continued for several more weeks, it became evident that the PRC had lost. Nevertheless, the US maintained four to five carriers on station until 28 September 1958. [Ref. 2, p 37] Once again, the PRC had been deprived from victory by American seapower. This 1958 defeat forced the PRC to the realization that its own navy was grossly inferior and ill-equipped. It is quite possible that the events in the Taiwan Strait only eased the decision of the PRC to enhance their program of naval assistance from the Soviet Union.

## **B. SINO-SOVIET COOPERATION**

Between 1951 and 1954, the Chinese had received their first naval aid from the USSR with the delivery of 50, P 4 motor torpedo boats which made up the major offensive striking force of the PRC Navy. Also during this period, the Chinese received one M-class short-range submarine, and three S 1-class submarines. One of the more significant Soviet material additions to the PLAN fleet came in 1954 with a shipment of four *Gordy*-class destroyers, six *Kronstadt*-class submarine chasers, and two T 43-class minesweepers.

During the early and mid 1950's, the PLAN had acquired a number of surface ships and submarines but it was not until 1954 that the PRC had a significant naval air arm. In 1954 there were only two naval air divisions with about 80 aircraft and all of the pilots and ground crews were being trained by Soviet and PLA Air Force personnel. By 1960 the PRC naval air

arm had 500 aircraft, mostly jet fighters and light jet bombers,\* based near the coast for coastal air defense and protection of shipping, and offensively for operations against the offshore islands and hostile shipping.

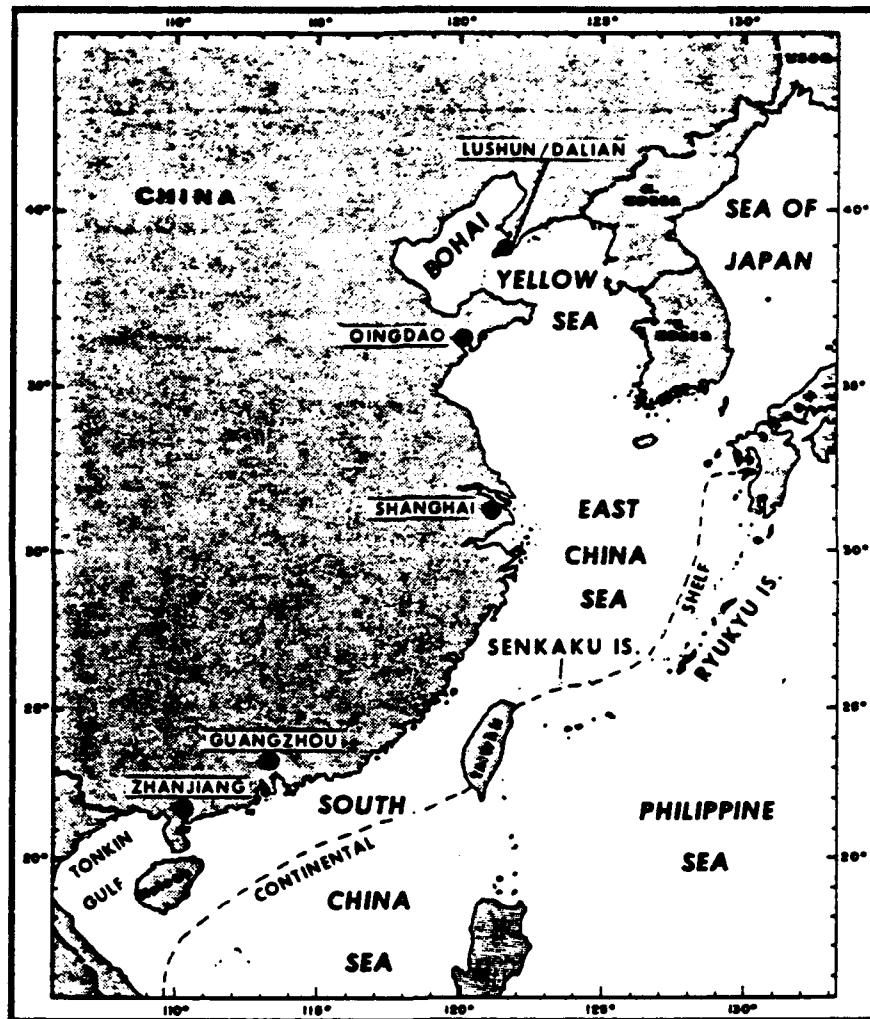
By the end of the Korean War, the Soviets were regularly criticizing the US overseas bases as infringements upon local sovereignty and as evidence of hostile American intentions. Moscow, in an attempt to demonstrate its lack of "imperialist" ambitions, while increasing China's prestige among other Third World countries, began to cease its occupation of Chinese territories beginning with their pull-out from the port of Lushun in 1955.\*

Despite the absence of operational Soviet naval forces in China after 1955, the pervasive Soviet influence continued. Most ships in the Chinese fleet and nearly all weapons and equipment were of Soviet design or origin. Soviet instructors were key members of the faculty at every naval training center in China, and they imparted Soviet tactical doctrine to an "unschooled but eager cadre" of Chinese naval officers. At the same time, senior Chinese officers spent years in command and staff courses in the Soviet Union. Upon their return to China, these officers implemented Soviet organizational philosophy and doctrines governing force development and employment to the PRC Navy. It is noteworthy to point out that the present chairman of China's Military Affairs Commission, Liu Huaqing, attended the Voroshilov Naval Academy in the Soviet Union in the 1950s. Liu was (and still is) an advocate of Soviet Admiral Gorshkov's belief in high-technology and modern equipment essential for naval buildup. [Ref. 10, p 17]

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\* The first 80 aircraft were all propeller driven. It was in 1955 that jet aircraft were introduced to China and the designs were exclusively Soviet. These aircraft included: MiG-15s, MiG-17s (fighters), and the Il-28 (jet bomber).

\* See map, following page: The China seas and the continental shelf. [Ref. 2, p 6]



The China seas and the continental shelf



From 1955 on, after an influx of shipbuilding experts to China, Soviet naval assistance consisted of helping China build modern warships in Chinese shipyards. By 1956, nearly 100 small district patrol craft (YPs) had been produced in China with Soviet assistance and an ambitious naval construction effort was underway in Shanghai. With Soviet assistance, the shipyard at Shanghai was undertaking the construction of the modern, *Riga*-class escort destroyer, the conventionally powered\* W-class submarine, the *Kronstadt*-class antisubmarine craft, T 43 minesweepers, and the new class P 6 motor torpedo boat. All were of Soviet design. [Ref. 1, p 196]

In 1956 the desire for advanced technology was expressed during the Eighth Party Congress when a Chinese spokesman stated:

In leading scientific work, the Party should rely on scientists to the fullest extent. Modern sciences are finely divided into various fields. Only the specialists know the fine points of a certain field of science. When we have scientific problems, we must learn humbly from specialists. [Ref. 1, p 197]

With this, China's Academy of Military Science (CAMS) was established in the hope of combining the advanced Soviet military sciences with China's efforts to modernize its military. Prior to the establishment of CAMS, most of the equipment to be used aboard naval vessels in the PRC was shipped pre-assembled from the USSR and simply installed in China. [Ref. 2, p 30] While the Chinese were learning from this process, they were in no way capable of running a modern shipbuilding program of their own. This would become evident after the Soviets withdrew their assistance in 1960 following the Sino-Soviet split.

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\* Conventional power meaning diesel engine and battery propulsion.

The total Soviet role in the planning and execution of Chinese naval operations is unknown, but as late as January 1959, navy Commander Xiao Jingguang was reportedly meeting with Soviet naval advisors, "...to discuss the defense mission in the East China Sea area." The US naval attaché in Taipei (March 1959) reported that, "The PRC Navy was a faithful, miniature replica of the Russian Navy." [Ref. 2, p 33]

The PRC Navy in 1960 had come a long way in its first decade of existence with the aid of the Soviet Union. At the time of the navy's founding in 1950, it was made up of Nationalist defectors and PLA infantrymen. Muller states that in 1950,

The navy consisted of a diverse collection of patrol craft built in five countries over three decades, all in doubtful condition; ten years later, most of the old ships and craft had either been retired or had been refitted with uniform Soviet equipment, and whole classes of modern warships and submarines were under construction. At its beginning, the PRC Navy was utterly incapable of defending China against even the most minor incursion; by 1960, it had become the largest and most capable indigenous naval force in East Asia. [Ref. 2, p 39]

An ONI Review of the Chinese Navy in 1960 stated the following:

The PRC Navy possessed almost 350 ships, submarines, and small combatant craft. In addition to the 20-odd patrol craft inherited from the ROC Navy, the PRC now had 4 World War II-era Soviet Gordy class destroyers, and 4 new Riga class frigates. Also built from Soviet plans or transferred in finished form from the USSR were, 24 Kronstadt class large patrol craft, some 140 torpedo boats, and a dozen ocean minesweepers. Perhaps of prime importance, 9 coastal submarines of various classes had been transferred from the USSR and 17 of the postwar W class had been assembled in Chinese yards from Soviet components. The navy also had about 30 amphibious landing ships of US World War II origin, all of which had defected from the ROC Navy or had been captured. [Ref. 2, p 40]

It was an article of fact at this time that the greatest threat to China's security came from the United States, and the chief instrument of American

power in East Asia was the US Navy. China's Navy Vice Commander, Zhou Xihan's statement was typical of the underlying beliefs of the time:

In the past hundred years, as a result of our complete lack of coastal defense, imperialist aggression against us has come mostly from the sea. Our people have realized from historical experience that naval defense is an important component part of national defense and that our national defense would not be solid unless there is a powerful naval defense force. Therefore (we) have always hoped for the building of a naval force capable of repulsing imperialist aggression from the sea. [Ref. 2, p 47]

### C. THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT (1960)

Since the Chinese and the Russian peoples had very different histories, self-images, needs, and goals, it is not surprising that a major split developed between them on several levels at once. Memory made them suspicious of each other: the Mongol horde of the thirteenth century had enslaved South Russia; Tsarist imperialists had encroached on China's Northeast, Mongolia, and Turkestan. Behind the Communist fraternal rhetoric, history provided few bonds of mutual admiration. [Ref. 34, p 964]

The PRC Navy in its second decade underwent several trying events. The PLAN's troubles began with the withdrawal of Soviet assistance in mid-1960 (the Sino-Soviet split) and continued its downward trend with Mao's Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution in 1966. It was a period of great strain and debate as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the PLA argued over how best to achieve China's strategic goals. These goals were:

(1) How to assure national security; (2) How to attain great power status; (3) How to achieve unification with Taiwan and; (4) How to promote revolution and socialism in the world. [Ref. 1, p 224]

The Sino-Soviet split had an immediate and devastating effect on both naval development and operational readiness. The withdrawal of Soviet assistance to China in mid 1960 brought virtually all PRC naval construction to an abrupt halt. While as many as 2,000 advisors had been assisting the PRC in 1953, by early 1960 the number was down to 150. Approximately 30

advisors were at naval headquarters in Beijing and the remainder of the 150 were at the various shipyard and naval schools. By 1961 these remaining advisors were gone, and many of the PRC naval vessels were out of commission due to the lack of spare parts and maintenance expertise from the USSR.

Naval development was highly important to the national leadership however, and beginning in 1962 a resurgence in both construction and operation got under way. However, fuel for ships became a problem as the Soviets slashed their exports to China by 40 percent.\* Maintenance and fuel problems combined to reduce the tempo of Chinese naval operations which had an adverse effect on the navy's tactical proficiency and general operational readiness. Furthermore, there was no way the Chinese could acquire what they needed from the United States because of the lack of formal recognition.

In both construction and operational terms the navy was at a near standstill for the two years following the break with the Soviet Union. But as a result, priorities were set to make naval development a self-reliant system, one capable of operations without foreign advice or supplies. Between 1962 and the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in late 1966, expenditures on naval construction in China rose about 600%. This increase went hand in hand with the PRC's overall defense budget. Military use of Chinese industrial products comprised 25% of the national output in 1966. [Ref. 2, p 91] Both the naval and national leadership had learned how vulnerable

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\* At this time, China was importing over 60 percent of its oil from the Soviet Union and the 40% reduction was considered a drastic cut.

China had become by depending on foreign countries for technical advice and naval construction.

#### **D. THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION (1966)**

In the summer of 1966, Premier Zhou Enlai expressed the seriousness of the situation that had developed in China, commonly termed the Cultural Revolution. He defined the Cultural Revolution as a "struggle" where,

The Chinese wanted to liquidate entirely by this "cultural revolution" all the old ideas, the entire old culture, all the old habits and customs created by the exploiting classes in the course of thousands of years of poisoning people....We want to create a form in the ranks of the broad masses of the people the new ideas, the new culture, the new habits and customs of the proletariat. Zhou added that the "main cutting edge of this cultural revolution is turned against a handful of bad elements that are waging dirty anti-Communist activity under the cover of a false communism." [Ref. 1, p 237]

By late 1966 as a result of the Cultural Revolution, all services experienced a purge of their best officers. The man charged with overseeing the next phase of China's naval modernization program was the new chairman of the Military Affairs Commission, Marshal Lin Biao. Of all of China's senior military leaders, Lin was the man Mao trusted most.

In the early days of the Cultural Revolution, the navy continued to train at an accelerated rate, but the renewed emphasis on political instruction caused serious rifts in the PRC's naval leadership. Adding to the frustration of naval commanders, Mao urged the shortening of military education at training schools. He said that if the illiterate soldiers of the Red Army could defeat the Kuomintang's military staff college graduates, then schooling could be shortened. Mao's views were quickly accepted and one of the first naval training policies to succumb was the submarine policy of 30% non-qualified

crewmen to 70% qualified crewmen. It was replaced by a system whereby, submarine deployments were approved with as many as 80% of the crew newly assigned and not properly trained.

Disagreements created serious political and technical problems in the shipyards as well. In 1967, rebel groups composed of Maoists and anti-Maoists vied for leadership positions in the shipyards for nearly six months. By the end of December 1967, the power struggle became so violent that the shipyard in Shanghai had to be shut down. Subsequently, a naval unit was sent into the yard to stabilize the situation. These struggles had a serious impact on the PRC's naval construction capabilities. During the Cultural Revolution, China produced only 16 major combatant ships, all of which had been previously under construction. The Chinese did manage to build small ships but, these vessels already had prototypes built prior to the Cultural Revolution and did not require a high level of construction skills or technological knowledge to produce.

In the words of Bruce Swanson,

If the Cultural Revolution was intended to reinforce technological isolationism, to lay stress on coastal defenses, and to emphasize politics at the expense of operational training and strategic weapons development, then it accomplished its goals. [Ref. 1, p 250]

In summary, the Cultural Revolution's general effect on the navy was to render it "catatonic." The navy did not progress during this period, but seemed to go into a state of suspension while political turmoil ran rampant. The Cultural Revolution cost the navy valuable time in its modernization programs and it stunted the growth of many in the officer corps who believed the radical slogans that said, "nothing could be or should be learned from bourgeoisie navies." [Ref. 1, p 253]

Professor, John K. Fairbank described this period of China's history as follows:

...the Cultural Revolution is generally seen as "ten lost years" in China's modern development. The wanton destructiveness of ignorant teenagers; the reign of terror against members of the intellectual and official establishments; the harassment, jailing, beating, torture, and often killing perpetrated against something like a million victims were an enormous human and cultural disaster. [Ref. 34, p 971]

With the Cultural Revolution barely over, China again found itself threatened, this time at her borders to the north with the USSR and to the south in Vietnam by the escalation of US military action. China's fears of "being encircled by imperialists" caused new attention to be paid to the perceived naval threat from the United States.

#### **IV. NEW ATTENTION TO FOREIGN POLICY: 1968-1976**

Despite the disruption of the early 1960s, the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet split and the Cultural Revolution, the Navy managed to mature into a unified and well organized armed force by the mid 1970s. New attention was showered on foreign policy. The Vietnam War and the failed coup attempt of Lin Biao (1971) were both relevant to China's evolving foreign policy. It is during this late period in China's long history that the navy again became a vital player in Chinese foreign relations. During the last years of Mao Zedong, and the re-establishment of relations with the United States, the American factor brought about an entirely new stage in Chinese naval development.

With the struggles of the Cultural Revolution over, China found itself engaged in a border dispute with the USSR. In March 1969, Soviet and Chinese border guards clashed on the Wusuli River over the 1.5 mile long island of Zhenpao; known to the Soviets as Damansky. During the course of the next several months, a number of small skirmishes broke out along the 3,500 mile Sino-Soviet border, some as far west as the Xinjiang Province. Both the Chinese and the Soviets sent the other strong letters of protest over these incidents, each promising strong measures if the other government persisted with armed confrontation.

The Soviet's ultimate response to the skirmishes was to send large numbers of ground forces into the common border area in late 1969; the total



reached an estimated 40 to 50 divisions.\* This in turn led the Chinese to charge that the Soviets were installing launching pads for nuclear missiles along China's, Soviet and Mongolian borders, believed ultimately, "for use against China." [Ref. 1, p 254] Soviet help could no longer be depended upon as the great hope against American naval encroachment, until the Tet Offensive in Vietnam.

China's fears of, "being encircled by imperialists," were heightened by the escalation of US military action at the southern edge of their country. American air strikes in North Vietnam were a common occurrence, and the total number of US military personnel in Vietnam was steadily increasing. Frequent reports of US spy planes being shot down over China, Chinese protests of the over-flights, and increased US naval activity in the South China Sea, produced a paranoia in Beijing among Lin Biao\* and his followers. Until Tet, the Chinese acted on the assumption that US action in Vietnam was only a prelude to America's real goal in Asia, which was the destruction of the Chinese Communist system.

While the situation with the Soviets was considered extremely serious, the United States was still considered to be the greatest threat to China's security. Fear of hostile American intentions in the region was not a new attitude among Chinese military strategists or for Lin Biao. However, Lin

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\* While it may be irrelevant to China's naval development and the American factor, in order to comprehend the size of the Soviet threat it is important to note that at this time in Soviet history, the Soviet Army divisions had three different levels of mobilization, called categories: "A, B, or C." A category "A" division was one hundred percent manned at 10,000-12,000 troops. Category "B" would be manned at 70 percent of Cat A; while Cat C was "30" percent, or as few as 3,000 troops. Even if the divisions on the Sino-Soviet borders were all Cat C, the total number of troops still numbered in excess of 147,000.

\* Lin Biao was the Minister of National Defense and the senior vice chairman of the Military Affairs Commission.

now believed\* that the development of modern weaponry was crucial to China's survival since they faced the USSR to the north and the United States to the south. [Ref. 1, p 255]

After Tet, the United States was no longer feared, but it had to be opposed. Lin believed that the defense budget should be raised, primarily the better to resist the United States. As confirmation of Lin's attitude, PRC defense spending increased significantly in 1970. The defense budget rose from an estimated \$5.5 billion between 1964 and 1969, to a total of about \$13 billion in 1970. Naval weapons development and planning for a nuclear submarines moved from the blueprint stage to the assembly line, and construction of conventionally powered submarines was tripled from a rate of two units a year, to a rate of six submarines per year between 1968-1974. Furthermore, China began to increase its production of surface ships. An additional three *Jiangnan*-class frigates (making a total of five), approximately ten *Osa* and *Komar* missile-craft, and six new destroyers (the *Luda*-class), all produced in the early 1970s, demonstrated China's best technical shipbuilding effort to date. The PRC research and development institutes were also busy designing several new classes of frigates that would be armed with experimental surface to air missiles. [Ref. 4, pp 362-397]

During this period, the Chinese also made several decisions that showed a new appreciation for naval strategy. The most important decision was the build up of the South Sea Fleet, which was done to add to China's

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\* Lin's active role in the Cultural Revolution, where he and others believed in Chinese political centrality, cultural superiority, and economic self-sufficiency, in effect stifled naval development. Lin was a strong proponent of maintaining a strong coastal defense and in the early days of the Vietnam war believed that the PRC should not become involved in the confrontation to the south.

credibility among the other nations and navies in the region. Swanson notes that by the mid 1970s, "Lin Biao had oriented China's naval building program toward an expansionist policy." [Ref. 5, p 95]

While a modest increase in naval development was underway in China, in spite of the interruptions of the Cultural Revolution, there was also a renewed interest in Chinese contacts with the outside world. Most of the PRC's foreign relations during this period were designed to counter Soviet activity in the region. The Soviets had displaced the Americans as enemy number one. Some of these Chinese contacts had naval implications. The PRC began to give the navy a role in carrying out Chinese foreign policy, particularly in state to state diplomacy and military aid programs in the following areas.

*Albania.* When Albania withdrew from the Warsaw Treaty Organization, one month after the USSR invaded Czechoslovakia (August 1968), Mao, Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai sent a joint message congratulating them for "striking a heavy blow to the Soviet revisionists." Shortly following this congratulatory note, the Chinese sent naval advisors to assist the Albanians in shoring up the nation's coastal defense with missiles and guns. The main emphasis concentrated on the Albanian naval base at Saseno, which was strengthened by the Chinese as a preventative measure against a possible Soviet naval attack. [Ref. 1, p 256]

*Pakistan.* In 1970, China concluded an arms agreement with Pakistan that had provisions for China to supply the Pakistanis with naval hardware. The PRC in the late 1960s and early 1970s spent a significant amount of time and effort in Pakistan with military delegations and foreign naval exchanges,

designed to increase China overseas presence and to counter Soviet and American influence in the region. [Ref. 1, pp 256-257]

*Sri Lanka and North Korea.* In 1971 China was reported to be conducting talks with the Sri Lankan government regarding the lease of the ex-British naval base at Trincomalee for use in the servicing of China's naval and merchant ships. The naval facility at Trincomalee greatly extended the range of China's "coastal fleets." Fear of Soviet influence in Korea also moved the Chinese to strengthen military relations with North Korea. In September 1971 a new Sino-North Korean military aid agreement was signed in Beijing. Unlike the 1961 agreement, this one called for the provision of unspecified PRC naval aid to North Korea. [Ref. 1, p 257]

While these efforts were centered on countering Soviet influence in the region and extending the PLAN's potential reach, the United States still remained the primary threat to China's maritime security. The US Seventh Fleet consisted of several aircraft carriers and dozens of cruisers and destroyers, supported by major naval bases in Japan, Guam, and the Philippines. As relations between Washington and Beijing grew colder, the Vietnam war intensified making China's fear of encirclement worse.

#### **A. THE PRC NAVY IN VIETNAM**

The Chinese Navy did not engage in combat during the Vietnam war. In fact, even the deployment of forces to the South Sea Fleet appeared to be held at a minimum, as if to send a signal to the US that the PRC had no intention of engaging American naval forces in the waters of the Gulf of Tonkin or near Hainan.

Chinese coastal defense forces in southern China did remain alert to US incursions however, particularly to aircraft flying into Chinese airspace. While US aircraft were under strict orders to remain "well clear" of PRC airspace during the war, several American pilots, possibly due to disorientation, did manage to violate Chinese territory. The PRC naval air force, responsible for defending against intrusions from the south and seaward, succeeded in intercepting a number of US aircraft and shooting down several during the course of the war. [Ref. 2, p 100]

Possibly out of respect for the tremendous amount of American military power in the region, PRC naval and air operations were contained to China's territorial borders and remained strictly defensive in nature. Chinese operational assistance to North Vietnam in the maritime sphere was limited almost entirely to cargo transport operations between ports in southern China and northern Vietnam, with transits routes strictly restricted to coastal waters. Again, possibly out of respect for American power, or fear of armed confrontation with US forces that might have brought the American anti-Communist campaign into China, the PRC naval units in the South China Sea remained relatively inactive for the duration of the US presence in Vietnam, and did not attempt to escort the supply ships bound for North Vietnam.

As the war continued and after the 1968 Tet Offensive, Muller states that, "...both the US and the PRC came to understand each other's intentions more clearly." The political fallout in the United States following the Tet Offensive led the Chinese to perceive the American threat as a "paper tiger;" one where the political capital at home was too expensive to risk intense

involvement of US forces in the Far East. Nevertheless, the Chinese navy continued to treat the US Seventh Fleet's potential power with great respect, as became evident in 1970.

In 1970, China began a minor build up of its forces in the South Sea Fleet, but this build up was modest in comparison to the activity under way in the North and East Sea fleets where naval construction was progressing much more rapidly. The cautious approach taken in the south was done in such a manner so as not to "concern or provoke" the United States. One US intelligence assessment of the situation stated that,

Newly arrived units at South Sea Fleet bases are not expected to be deployed to areas where their presence could be interpreted by other nations as offensive or hostile moves. [Ref. 2, p 101]

The Chinese stayed well clear of the United States for the duration of American involvement in Vietnam, but in 1971, a shake up of the military's top leadership would again hinder China's naval development and force a reexamination of China's military strategy.

## **B. THE FALL OF LIN BIAO**

Border tensions with the USSR, the Vietnam War, and the decision to modernize all coincided with the rise and fall of Lin Biao. In April 1969 the Ninth Party Congress convened which turned out to be a stepping stone to power for Lin Biao and his radical military faction. Lin Biao was a genuine military hero, primarily because of his victories for China in Manchuria during the Cultural Revolution. It is relevant to note that a full 45% of the Ninth Central Committee members (170 full members and 109 alternates) were PLA representatives. Furthermore, only nine members from the pre-

Cultural Revolution period Politburo survived membership and among the twelve new members, seven were navy admirals.

The ascendancy of Lin Biao and his followers to power in the wake of the Ninth Party Congress threatened many disparate groups in China. A backlash developed that led to an attempted coup and eventually cost Lin his life.

It was the severity of policy disputes which brought Lin into direct confrontation with other interest groups following the Ninth Party Congress. Disputes over service rivalry and regionalism erupted within the PLAN, which were fueled by the decision to give the Air Force and Navy a greater piece of the defense budget, significantly cutting into the Army's traditionally larger appropriation. Excesses created by the Cultural Revolution, which led to an increase in non-military duties assigned to the PLA, led to internal political struggles. Some military leaders, concerned with the massive Soviet build up on the border and US activities in Vietnam, felt that these political decisions, regarding the civil use of the PLA, were intolerable. Finally, the most significant policy dispute centered on a new and daring foreign policy maneuver being contemplated by Zhou Enlai and apparently approved by Mao. It involved putting a stop to the "dual adversary strategy" and seeking détente with the United States. [Ref. 1, pp 258-259] It meant that China would now view the USSR as the primary threat to national security and a new relationship with the United States would be established.

Lin Biao and his followers (avid "anti-American" military commanders) took strong exception to this last political endeavor by strongly criticizing Japanese and US naval activities in the Asia-Pacific region.

Between 1969 and 1971, several news articles quoting Lin and his subordinates, pointed to the Japanese and US naval threats as paramount to China's security. Shortly before Dr. Henry Kissinger's first trip to China in 1971, which would lay the groundwork for President Nixon's 1972 visit, one Chinese press account stated that,

The US Seventh Fleet was an important tool for US imperialism in pursuing its policy of aggression and war in the Far East and Southeast Asia. [Ref. 1, p 260]

The issues described above proved to have been a test for the many factions vying for power in China. While Lin's faction appeared to be in control at the time, Zhou and several powerful anti-Lin military commanders, formed a coalition with Madam Mao and her left-wing Cultural Revolution group. The pressures they were able to generate against Lin was apparently so great that it forced him into contemplating a coup that included a plot to assassinate Mao.

When the plot was discovered in September 1971, the major conspirators attempted to flee China in an air force VIP aircraft. As luck would have it, shortly after take-off the plane crashed in Outer Mongolia. Within weeks of the incident, the outside world began to learn that a high-level purge had occurred in China. Lin Biao, his wife, the PLA chief, and the director of the General Logistics Department of the army, all perished.\* This shake-up of China's top military leaders was cause for an internal reexamination of the entire spectrum of the Chinese military. Needless to say, this too had important implications for the navy.

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\* This is the official version of the events that took place up to and including the plane crash. Doubts have been raised whether Lin Biao was really among the victims of the crash.



While the navy had very little to do with Defense Minister Lin Biao's alleged coup attempt in September 1971, he had been very supportive of the navy and saw to it that the navy was exempted from many of the distractions of the Cultural Revolution. His death brought about an immediate decline in military spending and a reevaluation of China's military goals. [Ref. 1, p 261]

Immediately following the fall of Lin Biao, the Chinese armed forces suffered drastic budget cuts and the navy specifically lost its tempo in naval construction and almost the entire operating budget. [Ref. 2, p 106] Nevertheless, in the mid 1970s the Chinese enjoyed a naval victory in the Paracel Islands over South Vietnam (January 1974), many key officers purged during the Cultural Revolution were returned to active duty, and the foundations were laid for further naval expansion and an entirely new outlook on naval strategy.

### **C. THE PEOPLE'S WAR AT SEA**

A decided change was about to occur in China's maritime doctrine, and its major cause was the new relationship with the United States. The Soviet "Young School" of naval coastal defense strategy which had taken root in China during the later half of the 1950s remained central to China's maritime strategic thought before the new relationship with the United States. The major reason the Chinese took so readily to Young School thinking was that conceptually it was guerrilla warfare taken to sea. With this thinking, the PLAN was able to effortlessly apply Mao's prescriptions on guerrilla tactics. The concealment of forces behind islands or among fishing fleets, and the rapid concentration of forces for surprise attack was employed effectively

during the island campaigns against the Nationalists. This mode of naval combat would become known as the "People's War at Sea." [Ref. 2, p 115]

While this mode of naval combat had served the PRC well against the ROC Navy in the Taiwan Strait during the 1950s and 1960s, some of the navy's leadership had concerns over its effectiveness against high performance aircraft, missiles, ships, and submarines of the US and Soviet navies. Muller states that,

It was readily admitted in discussions of naval strategy the enemy ships had a decided technical advantage in size, sophistication and range of weaponry. [Ref. 2, p 115]

The People's War at Sea was designed to protect the navy from domestic political attack rather than to serve as a prescription for actual naval warfare. The most crucial shortcoming of the doctrine was its vagueness in identifying the enemy against which it was to be employed. Because of the PRC Navy's realistic and prudent approach of "caution" with regard to the US Seventh Fleet in the Tonkin Gulf, the People's War at Sea was never tested.

The People's War at Sea doctrine was supported from the top down among China's military leadership as they were all graduates of the Young School in the Soviet Union. It was not until the late 1970s, as the Chinese began to develop maritime economic interests, and as the Soviet Pacific Fleet became an alarming menace to China's maritime security, that the PRC Navy turned away from the Young School of naval strategic thought. [Ref. 2, p 115]

#### **D. SHAPING OF A NEW FOREIGN POLICY**

During the 1960s, the Soviet Pacific Fleet was lagging well behind the Northern, Baltic, and Black Sea fleets in the acquisition of new naval ships and weapons. The Pacific Fleet did not operate regularly in the East or South

China seas and this minimal naval presence had kept China's threat assessment of the Soviet Navy relatively low. Nevertheless, throughout the 1960s, China continued to favor its own North and East Sea fleets with most of its newly built ships and submarines, perhaps indicating a perception of potential threat from the north. [Ref. 2, p 114]

The Sino-Soviet border clashes along the Wusuli River in March 1969 marked a major turning point in Sino-Soviet relations. For the first time, the Soviet navy came to be explicitly described as a threat to China. In Muller, the situation was described as follows:

The Soviet revisionist renegade clique is frantically expanding its navy and building up a fleet with combat ability in far oceans in order to use it as a strength to back up its contention with US imperialism. [Ref. 2, p 114]

Immediately after the death of Defense Minister Lin Biao, the Chinese armed forces were subject to drastic budget cutbacks. Military spending, which had surged by 10% per year since 1965, plummeted 20% in the year following the fall of Lin. Perhaps the only positive naval development that came out of the early 1970s, was that many of the senior officers who had been purged during the Cultural Revolution were returned to active duty. After the death of Lin Biao and the purge of his allies, Deng Xiaoping\* and company returned to power in 1972. [Ref. 2, p 152]

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\* Deng Xiaoping was the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and, "Viewed China's destiny to be dependent upon more intellectual freedom and human or cultural rights; de-emphasizing domestic and foreign class struggle; improving the economy by adopting 'capitalist' wage and material incentive programs; imitating or borrowing from foreign technology; creating a strong and effective collective-leadership system rather than relying on an individual dictatorship; and stressing the development of a modern military force." [Ref. 1, p. 235] Deng also favored the improvement of China's navy and merchant fleet by purchase or charter. He felt that, "Unless China modestly copied foreign designs and production techniques, any large-scale maritime building program was unattainable." [Ref. 1, p 237]

On 21 February 1972, President Richard M. Nixon made history and changed the tide of US-PRC relations, by merely stepping onto Chinese soil. Prior to Nixon meeting Zhou Enlai, the US had embargoed all trade with China and had worked to exclude it from the United Nations. Harry Harding states in A Fragile Relationship that,

The arrival of the president of the United States acknowledged the failure of that strategy and thus was a vindication of Zhou, his government, and the entire Chinese Communist movement. [Ref. 6, p 3]

The common interest that was most responsible for bringing these two leaders together was their apprehension about the Soviet Union. Harding recalls the circumstances that motivated a rapprochement between the US and China as follows.

At a maximum, the two countries could find ways of coordinating their strategic postures, or even pooling some of their military assets, in a united front against Soviet expansion. At a minimum, ending the Sino-American confrontation would mean that neither the United States nor China would have to be worried about a two-front war. Instead, that burden would be shifted to their adversaries in the Kremlin. [Ref. 6, p 4]

While neither Mao nor Zhou envisioned making China part of the world economy, they both felt that closer relations, including economic and cultural ties, with the United States would be necessary to bring China completely out of the self-imposed isolation of the Cultural Revolution. An improved relationship with the United States would have important security implications as well; it would be a prerequisite for the purchase of advanced American technology and would facilitate the import of similar technology from American allies in Western Europe and Japan. [Ref. 6, p 4]

Technologies that would be necessary if China was to have the navy they

apparently desired. China also hoped for a sharp overhaul of the COCOM regulations.\*

A new phase in Chinese naval development began in May 1975, when Party Chairman Mao Zedong convened a meeting of the Central Military Commission. On his agenda was a "crash program" directed at the modernization and development of the PRC Navy. In 1975 a plan was approved and called for,

The development of an ocean going navy, able to meet superpower adversaries on equal terms and to pursue regional, political, and economic interests effectively. [Ref. 2, p 154]

Mao authorized this program of major naval modernization for two reasons. First, China's political authorities had made peace with their primary, potential, maritime enemy, the United States, and second, was in direct response to the growing Soviet Pacific naval threat. Beyond was the specter of Japan, which was in Chinese eyes the proxy of the United States. The Chinese could neither understand nor accept the US-Japanese security connection. This began to be exposed as the real cause for the Chinese push for its naval expansion.

In 1975 Mao endorsed the new naval plan but it was not until late 1976, after the purge of the Gang of Four, that technical and operational modernization actually occurred. In the later half of the 1970s, the PRC Navy finally made its first move into "blue water" and began to realize its potential as a key player in the strategic situation in East and Southeast Asia.

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\* COCOM regulations: The Coordinating Committee for multi-lateral export controls was established in 1949 and still serves to control the export of strategic technology and goods from member countries (NATO allies, minus Iceland, plus Japan) to specified countries - namely countries which support communist ideologies.

With the death of Mao in 1976, and the resulting purge of the radicals that surrounded him (the Gang of Four), naval strategic thought began to contain elements of sea denial, sea control, power projection ashore and afloat, and strategic deterrence. The navy's traditional coastal defense mission was redefined and China looked to modern naval warfare on the high seas.

In the post-Mao period, China described its ambitions for a powerful navy. *Renmin Ribao* expressed this sentiment with the following statement:

The revolutionary spirit . . . for the building of a powerful navy - long repressed by the Gang of Four - has erupted like a volcano. . . . The commanders and fighters again revised their plans and measures for the building of a powerful navy. . . . The scientific research personnel who were once suppressed by the Gang of Four brought out the blueprints then had previously drawn, conducted research day and night, and trial-made new devices. In just a few months, many units completed the training which they had not carried out for many years in the past. Their tactical and technical levels were raised considerably. The tempo of construction for certain projects that had been obstructed and sabotaged by the Gang of Four was accelerated. [Ref. 2, p 158]

After China normalized relations with the United States, the PRC Navy began to take up its natural role in the Asia-Pacific by becoming the strongest tool in support of its foreign policy. It was the reassessment of the American factor - the zigs and the zags in relations with the United States - that would basically influence the exponential growth in the strength of China's drive toward a blue water navy.

## V. NAVAL REFORM AND MODERNIZATION: 1976-1989

By far the most important event of this period was the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States in January 1979. The accomplishments and deficiencies of the PRC Navy, the onset of US-PRC strategic cooperation, and China's economic reforms, each contained a natural maritime component that was strongly influenced by the American factor and had a significant impact on China's naval development and maritime doctrine.

As previously stated Mao Zedong died in September 1976, and immediately thereafter the Gang of Four was arrested and a long-term purge of the leftist radicals from Chinese ruling circles began. The purge of the radicals opened the way for the naval modernization program adopted in 1975. [Ref. 2, p 158]

Under the new program, construction began on the types of ships that would be necessary if Chinese naval operations were to take them into distant waters. The most important of the open-ocean, operational support vessels which began construction in the late 1970s, was the underway replenishment ship (AOR), called the *Fuqing* class. Perhaps of greater interest to China's neighbors, the construction of a new class of amphibious landing ship began production in 1977 and was produced at a rate of four per year until the mid 1980s. Finally, of equal or even greater importance in these first attempts to build an ocean going (blue water) navy, efforts to develop a nuclear powered submarine intensified, and the first of the class was launched in 1981.

The construction programs of this period were significant because these new naval platforms were China's first attempt at building vessels designed to be offensive in nature. However, by superpower standards, the Chinese naval craft produced during this period were comparable in sophistication to the effort of the 1950s in the United States. Muller states,

In terms of modern weaponry - guided missiles, electronics, computers, antisubmarine sensors and weapons, and gas turbine power plants - China was furiously building an obsolete navy. [Ref. 2, p 159]

While the post-Mao leadership appeared committed to a long-term naval strengthening program, China's continued problems in (naval) modernization stemmed from two root causes, technological backwardness and a modest industrial base. [Ref. 7, p 238] Edward W. Ross stated that two main obstacles impeded the transformation of military acquisitions into actual military capabilities.

First, reduced foreign exchange reserves, coupled with the relatively low priority assigned to defense modernization, meant that China could not afford to purchase technology and equipment in sufficient quantities to effect a near-term, across-the-board upgrade of its military capabilities. Second, because China's military industrial plant and equipment, along with its doctrine, strategy, and tactics, were in most respects distinctly outdated... [Ref. 16, p 98]

#### A. NAVAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND DEFICIENCIES

*Accomplishments.* Among the dramatic events following China's normalized relations with the United States in 1978, China signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Japan and two years later let the 1950 treaty of mutual defense with the USSR lapse without any attempt to renew it.

The international balance of power during this period took a serious turn for the worse as far as Moscow was concerned. The United States, China,



and Japan appeared to be forming a de facto understanding to counter the USSR in Asia. Zhou Enlai's policy of détente with the United States was paying off unexpected military (naval) dividends for Beijing. The United States did not object to its NATO allies negotiating arms sales with China. Washington provided communications equipment, computers, and radar equipment, which all had military applications. In early 1980, Defense Secretary Brown offered to sell Beijing a variety of "non lethal" military equipment. Clearly, Washington was "playing the China card." [Ref. 7, p 236]

A dramatic shift occurred in the East Asian balance of power when the United States agreed to sell weapons to China in 1981. This placed the USSR at an alarming strategic disadvantage because of the more "maritime-oriented" China. According to Bruce Swanson,

...[China] elevated herself to second place on the [Soviet] threat list, making China equal to Europe (the United States obviously remains first). With increasing frequency, the Soviet Union has expressed concern over the rapid buildup of the PRC navy and its potential for conducting naval operations in the broader ocean areas. [Ref. 1, p 274]

In response to Sino-American (naval) cooperation, the Soviets began to strengthen their Pacific Fleet and establish a naval presence in the South China Sea. If making second place on the Soviet threat list can be considered an accomplishment, then it is safe to say that China's success in turning the nation seaward was also a significant achievement in naval terms. Other naval accomplishments included:

1. By 1978, in terms of numbers of major combatants, the PRC navy was the third largest in the world. [This is also true in 1993.] China had more than 200 missile craft and its surface to surface missiles (SSMs) out numbered those of the United States. [Ref. 1, p 276]

2. By 1978, China possessed more than 100 conventional submarines, capable of interdiction as far away as the Straits of Malacca or the Philippine Sea. [Ref. 1, p 276]
3. China's newer missile equipped destroyers and frigates had ranges of 2,500 - 4,000 nautical miles for regional oceangoing operations, each had an implemented gear-turbine propulsion systems. [Ref. 8, p 96]
4. The Chinese successfully launched their first nuclear powered submarine, demonstrating competence in naval engineering and sophisticated propulsion systems. [Ref. 1, p 276]
5. In the spring of 1980 China successfully tested its first inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM). [Ref. 1, p 277]
6. A reemphasis in professionalism and training began throughout the navy. As an example, the PRC navy's submarine school added courses in operational research, military science and technology, English, and underwater survival techniques in 1981. [Ref. 1, p 277]

*Deficiencies.* Despite the many naval accomplishments of the period, China remained hindered by technology and was largely preoccupied with coastal defense. Deficiencies existed in China's weapons systems, electronics, warships and aircraft, and manpower, training and shore facilities. For example:

1. *Weapons Systems.* By 1980, China's one operational submarine (launched in 1974) encountered severe technical problems. It was readily known that China was apparently unable to develop a submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM), and had failed to date, to develop a reliable (surface launched) missile system for its submarines. [Ref. 1, p 278]
2. *Electronics.* China's best efforts by the early 1980s had failed to develop any unique ship-borne electronics. They relied on reverse engineering to produce electronics of Western or Soviet design. Most of the ship-board radar were developed by the Soviets 15 years earlier and like the rest of the PLAN's electronics were less effective than those of the modern systems used by their potential adversaries. [Ref. 1, p 278]

3. *Warships and Aircraft.* By the early 1980s, Chinese minesweepers were obsolete by Western standards, most of China's amphibious ships were old and inadequate to support a major offensive even as close as against the Nationalist held islands. China's naval air arm had about 700 obsolete aircraft, including 150 IL-28s, BE-6s, and TU-2s. However, China did possess a substantial number of the more modern MiG-15, MiG-17, and MiG-19 interceptors, but none of them had an all-weather, or antisubmarine-warfare, capability. [Ref. 1, p 278]
4. *Manpower, Training, and Shore Establishments.* Manpower figures during this period indicated that China's naval air arm only employed 200,000 officers and enlisted men. The PRC navy followed a practice of permanently assigning personnel to the same billet. A ships commanding officer for example, was expected to serve in that position for up to ten years. Tactics were kept at primitive levels, with emphasis on coastal defense rather than longer-range, sea denial tasks. The naval school system still suffered from the fallout of the Cultural Revolution and was highly decentralized and lacking unity of instruction. Shore establishment weaknesses lied in the Beijing Navy Headquarters, where ceremonial duties took priority over operational functions. Furthermore, the navy was responsible for a number of non-military duties like guarding offshore oil rigs and laying civil-communications cable. [Ref. 1, p 279]

While these deficiencies (and accomplishments) were significant, because of the détente with the United States, the PRC was now able to conduct naval diplomacy with the powers of the West. These diplomatic missions were designed to familiarize Chinese naval personnel with the new technologies and weapons systems of the United States and Europe. Since 1976, China has hosted a number of European naval delegations and Chinese naval officers have traveled abroad to view Western naval installations. In 1979, for example, a PRC naval group went to England where they visited Portsmouth, Davenport, and Gosport naval facilities, the Royal Naval College, and various Royal Navy ships. In early 1980, Vice-premier Geng

Biao went to the United States to look over American naval bases and during the visit he took a short cruise aboard the US aircraft carrier *Ranger*.

While the PRC was highly interested in the technologies and ships of the West, the Chinese naval visits were restricted to "window shopping." The great cost of Western equipment was the main reason why the Chinese did not make any large scale purchases abroad. [Ref. 1, p 281] However, after more than 25 years of isolation from the navies of the West, Chinese naval leaders were at last exposed to the thinking and resources of their newly-acquired Western counterparts. Chinese technicians were given access to foreign naval technology, and political relations were thereby enhanced. [Ref. 2, p 223]

#### **B. US-PRC STRATEGIC COOPERATION**

American officials in the mid-1980s saw a complex rationale for expanding a military relationship with China. On a larger scale and possibly of greater importance, a strategic relationship with China was regarded as an important way of strengthening American ties with the PRC as a whole. China's military and government leadership however, not willing to commit to a "comprehensive security relationship" with the United States, feared entanglement in a possible Soviet-American confrontation.

China's apprehensions over a comprehensive security relationship did not preclude limited military cooperation. Sino-American security relations developed along four dimensions in the mid-1980s. According to Harry Harding,

The first (dimension) involved high-level consultations among military and civilian officials from the two countries. ...Second, China and the United States continued to share intelligence on Soviet military

capabilities. ...The third dimension of Sino-American strategic cooperation involved the expansion of working-level exchanges between the two military establishments. ...Finally, the most controversial element of Sino-American military cooperation was the program of American arms sales to China. [Ref. 6, pp 165-167]

China's motivation for closer military relations with the United States sprang from a desire to obtain the technology needed for a military modernization consistent with its own long-term strategic goals of establishing the PRC as a world power. [Ref. 16, p 86]

While China wanted to acquire American technology so that it could manufacture its own equipment, the United States only wanted to sell finished products to China to minimize the diversion of its technology and to maximize corporate earnings. Because of these conflicting desires, few sales had actually taken place prior to 1984.

In 1984, the United States made it possible for China to purchase American weapons directly through the US government under the auspices of Foreign Military Sales (FMS), thus allowing access to official (government) financing. In the next several years the United States and China made several agreements on arms sales and technology transfers. The only major naval component of these agreements was designed to strengthen China's antisubmarine capabilities. The United States and China agreed to coproduce an antisubmarine torpedo\* capable of being launched by surface vessels. American commercial sales to China in the naval realm included S-70C helicopters, LM2500 gas turbine engines for naval ships, coastal defense radar, and communications equipment. [Ref. 16, p 93] On a larger scale, these

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\* This torpedo was the lightweight Mk. 46 Mod. 2 surface launched (over-the-side) torpedo. [Ref. 16, p 96]

programs accounted for a rapid increase in American arms deliveries to China, from \$8.0 million in fiscal year 1984 to \$106.2 million in fiscal year 1989.\* [Ref. 6, p 168]

By 1985, four mission areas had been agreed to by the US Secretary of Defense to focus Sino-American cooperative military activities: antitank warfare, artillery and artillery defense, air defense, and the only naval compromise, antisubmarine warfare. These four areas were meant to be clearly defensive in nature. Furthermore, the United States made it clear that it would not cooperate in six other major mission areas (primarily offensive in nature): nuclear weapons and the systems for delivering them, electronic warfare, surface ship antisubmarine warfare, intelligence, power projection, and air superiority. [Ref. 6, p 167]

As the strategic relationship between the United States and China expanded, American military analysts began to propose additional avenues for military cooperation with China. These proposals were significant because they reflected the mood of the middle to late -1980s. In the words of Harry Harding,

...(There was) a sense that Sino-American relations had not yet realized their full potential and that the main task of analysis was to identify the possibilities for further cooperation. [Ref. 6, p 169]

By late 1988 the prospects for continued Sino-American relations were uncertain at best. Despite the diffusion of the Taiwan issue, both China and the United States were becoming less confident in the stability of Sino-American relations. With the disintegration of communism in the Soviet Union, the common bond, "anti-Soviet rationale," was rapidly being

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\* See table, following page: US Military Sales to China, 1972-1990. [Ref. 6, p 371]

Source, *A Fragile Relationship*, p 371

*U.S. Military Sales to China, 1972-90*  
Thousands of current U.S. dollars

<i>Fiscal year</i>	<i>FMS agreements</i>	<i>Commercial export deliveries</i>	<i>Commercial deliveries plus FMS agreements</i>	<i>FMS deliveries</i>	<i>Total deliveries</i>
1972	...	4	4	...	4
1973	...	0	0	...	0
1974	...	0	0	...	0
1975	...	0	0	...	0
1976	...	0	0	...	0
1977	...	1,023	1,023	...	1,023
1978	...	0	0	...	0
1979	...	0	0	...	0
1980	...	622	622	...	622
1981	...	0	0	...	0
1982	...	1,000	1,000	...	1,000
1983	...	209	209	...	209
1984 <sup>a</sup>	629	8,037	8,666	6	8,043
1985	421	46,247	46,668	424	46,671
1986	36,069	55,243	91,312	547	55,790
1987	254,289	33,933	288,222	3,881	37,814
1988	14,129	48,891	63,020	39,122	88,013
1989	416	16,415	16,831	89,800	106,215
1990	0	3,615	3,615	0	3,615

Sources: For each year, see Security Assistance Agency, *Foreign Military Sales. Foreign Military Construction Sales and Military Assistance Facts* (Washington: Department of Defense). Because each year's publication provides an update of the previous ten years, consult the most recent yearbook that contains the year in question to obtain the most accurate figure.

a. China was made eligible for the foreign military sales (FMS) program in 1984.

removed. It became increasingly apparent that the Sino-American relationship now rested on the fate of reform in China. [Ref. 6, p 174]

### **C. ECONOMIC REFORM: THE NATURAL MARITIME COMPONENT**

It is clear that in the 1970s, China laid the foundations for its growth as a naval and maritime power. As the PRC Navy (PLAN) abandoned its limited coastal defense mentality it no longer saw itself as simply a coastal patrol and counter-invasion force. The Chinese navy was preparing for independent operations in waters distant from the Chinese coast while actively promoting and protecting China's maritime interests in the Western Pacific region.

In 1975, the PLAN embarked on a long term effort to modernize the concepts and methods governing its strategic employment. By 1983, the PRC Navy physically looked quite similar to the way it was in 1975 but, it was in fact very different as it had learned to *think* differently about itself and its missions. It was indeed on the verge of great expansion. [Ref. 2, p 224]

China's "opening up" to the outside world had its origins in the political leadership of the Communist Party, primarily in response to economic circumstances rather than out of history or ideology. Deng Xiaoping and his party decided in 1978 that foreign interests, specifically multinational capitalist corporations, could play a significant and constructive role in the long term development of the PRC, and indeed in the "Chinese form of socialism."

In 1978 China began a long term program of economic reforms. The authorities moved to enhance freedom of choice and the decision-making process so as to strengthen the role of market forces and gradually remove



centralized administrative controls. Reforms were aimed at increasing the flexibility of the system and at introducing some basic elements of the free market so that China would be better equipped to compete in the international environment.

The new open door for trade and investment got spectacular though mixed results. The great enthusiasms for contracting foreign loans to develop China's resources and industries after 1978 led at first to a great overexpansion and then to a bust. Grandiose plans and large contracts with Japanese, US, and European firms had to be scaled back. [Ref. 34, p 980]

China's emphasis on reform in the economic sphere produced a number of dramatic changes, the most significant one being the replacement of the Soviet economic model with a system closely resembling a capitalist economy. For example, China joined the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in 1980. By 1981, China had the largest quota among developing nations by obtaining loans totaling nearly \$1 billion. [Ref. 9]

China's economic interests in the maritime sphere underwent a dramatic change after the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention legitimized the concept of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). The EEZs that extend 200 miles from a nation's coastline contain overlapping definitions of the continental shelf and have encouraged states to be more assertive in pressing their claims to the sea territory. The single largest Chinese assertion was (and still is) the Spratly Island dispute in the South China Sea. The PRC, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei each had claim to all or part of the Spratly archipelago.\*

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\* The Spratly Island dispute is still a sticky point of contention between these countries. The six parties in the Spratly dispute base their claims on disparate justifications of sovereignty. A key point is that the overriding motive in each case is to reserve or preserve a political position in the South China Sea. A resolution of the Spratly dispute rests not on the

A sizable merchant marine fleet and the offshore oil industry developed because the national leadership saw them as essential to China's economic growth. Clearly the development of China as a naval power was, and still is, essential for the protection and promotion of these maritime economic interests. Oil companies, most of them American, have spent over \$3.2 billion looking for and processing oil in China's territorial waters since 1982. [Ref. 11]

By 1983, China's maritime strategic interests were very much in line with its maritime economic interests. Offshore oil and development of the vast continental shelf, coupled with a vulnerable merchant marine fleet, which was effectively and efficiently providing for secure transport of China's goods essential for foreign trade, provided the motivation for protection of China's maritime interests.

Historically, one does not have to look too far back to see how frequently naval power has been used in areas of crises or to simply send messages of resolve, concern and or support. The PRC had on numerous occasions used the movement of ground and air forces along the borders with the Soviet Union, India, and Vietnam, or in the Taiwan Strait, to demonstrate its concerns. By the mid 1980s, the PRC Navy had experimented with modern naval diplomacy and had deployed to waters off Japan, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. [Ref. 2, p 227]

By the late 1980s, China had established the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) along the coast. These zones included the cities by the sea that

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legitimacy of each state's claim but instead on the ability of the claimants to reach an acceptable solution within the larger political, military and economic context of the region. [Ref. 15, p 3]

collectively accounted for over 70% of China's GDP, [Ref. 12] and were considered central to China's continued economic growth and export trade. These cities and their natural sea lanes of trade and communication have since been viewed as essential to China's national security and thus China's maritime strategy.

To set up conditions that would attract foreign investors the PRC next created four Special Economic Zones, the most prominent of which was Shenzhen, next door to Hong Kong. Within such zones foreign investors were given special facilities for a foreign lifestyle while undertaking joint ventures with their Chinese counterparts. The zones were set apart from the Chinese economy in general. Along with them went the opening of fourteen ports specially suited to foreign trade - a bit reminiscent of the nineteenth-century treaty ports, though now China, not the foreigners, called the tune. [Ref. 34, p 980]

Also in the late 1980s, the discovery of natural gas and oil reserves, estimated to be worth over \$1 trillion in the East and South China Seas, gave easy justification for increased naval modernization. [Ref. 13] Protection of this huge potential-source of national income in the maritime territories claimed by China was seen as an essential role for the PLAN.

While the Chinese navy had come a long way in its first 40 years of existence, the PRC was beginning to "open up" to the outside world economically and relations with the United States had greatly enhanced China's position as a regional naval power. However, the Sino-American relationship was about to take a serious turn for the worse in June of 1989 after the events of Tiananmen Square shocked the world.

## **VI. AFTER THE COLD WAR: 1989-1993**

The political crisis in China that developed in the middle of 1989 suddenly and drastically transformed Sino-American relations. For many Americans, the sight of troops in Tiananmen Square seriously limited any hopes that China would soon be adopting American values or emulating American institutions. The appearance of an unstable central government made China a much less attractive place for American investment, scholarship, or tourism. Following the June 4th incident, the American press coupled with the sanctions imposed on China by the US Congress, and the congressional promise for further retaliation, convinced the Chinese that the United States was engaged in a program of "peaceful evolution" aimed ultimately at the overthrow of the Chinese Communist Party. [Ref. 6, p 11]

Changes in the international environment in the late 1980s and early 1990s, only intensified the impact of China's domestic crisis on Sino-American relations. The collapse of communism, first in Eastern Europe and then in the Soviet Union, only stood to reinforce the American tendency to perceive Beijing as a ruthless government. The collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe further intensified Chinese concerns about the future of their relationship with the United States.

The ease at which the American military defeated Iraq in early 1991, and the equally startling disintegration of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, left the United States the world's only remaining military superpower. In Chinese eyes, this threatened to create a unipolar world

centered on Washington and increased the odds that the United States would embark on a policy of peaceful evolution aimed at Communist China.

As China developed its power projection capability through the PLAN after the Tiananmen Square incident, unresolved territorial claims in the East and South China Seas led to a more assertive political and diplomatic posture in Asia. The changing balance of power throughout the world, and China's growing economic clout, strengthened China's resolve. Since 1989, all of China's leaders have recognized the importance of economic growth and individual prosperity to the nation's stability.

The aggressive role of China has exacerbated the tensions over the Spratlys. Not only are the islands rich in natural resources but in an intangible way, China after 1989 looked to increase its influence in the region. The PLAN had seized some islets from the Vietnamese and in doing so demonstrated a willingness to use its growing naval capability to show its resolve over the islands. A relatively modern Chinese navy enabled China to accomplish its objectives in the Spratlys and further its economic interests while at the same time projecting its political presence into the South China Sea.

A decided change in China's strategic (naval) and regional outlook occurred in 1992 when the US Navy pulled out of Subic Bay. With the American Navy no longer in the Philippines and the threat from the former Soviet naval fleet significantly reduced, China moved to increase its presence and prestige in the Western Pacific. China's expansion was designed to enhance its position in the region while giving it a more significant role in shaping any regional security arrangements. With China's navy as its

military muscle, the PRC moved to strengthen its economic and security structure on the entire Pacific rim.

Concerns about maritime (and on a larger scale, military) security in East Asia have if anything increased since the end of the Cold War. China's rapid military (and naval) buildup is supplemented by a fear that the United States will not be willing to act as a "regional balancer" for an indefinite period of time. An American draw-down and the potential for a US withdrawal (even if it is far fetched, it is a regional concern) from the region raises fears of a Japan once more on the march or the possibility of a threatening, nuclear armed, North Korea.

As proof that these fears were (and still are) real, the annual defense expenditures in East Asia rose dramatically from 1985 to 1991. Japan's military spending increased 15.6%; North Korea's spending increased by 15.8%; South Korea's by 27.8%; Taiwan's by 24.6%; Thailand's by 12.1%; Malaysia by 23.4%; the Philippines' by 42.9%; and China by a dramatic 60.1%. [Ref. 18, p 139]

#### **A. THE IMPACT OF TIANANMEN SQUARE**

The 1989 "pro-democracy" movement, China's most dramatic nationwide protest movement, reached its tragic climax on 4 June 1989 in Tiananmen Square. The incident at Tiananmen Square was a spontaneous uprising of not only students but, workers and ordinary citizens, a few party and government officials, leading journalists, and top "think-tank" entrepreneurs. On the night of 3-4 June, following two full weeks of martial law, enough troops had been assembled around Beijing to permit the final suppression of the demonstrations. The responsible soldiers were from the

regular army, equipped with tanks and automatic weapons rather than water cannon and tear gas, and neither adequately trained nor skillfully led in the suppression of urban protests. Perhaps provoked by occasional outbreaks of violence from the crowd, they open fired at random on demonstrators at the approaches to the center of Beijing, and steadily moved forward to retake Tiananmen Square. Although the casualty figures remain uncertain, the most common estimates indicated that a thousand demonstrators died and several thousands more were injured in that night's military crackdown.

The initial impact of the brutal crackdown on, and political oppression of, the pro-democracy movement by the PLA occasioned a show of worldwide outrage. The United States, Canada, and most Western European countries immediately imposed economic sanctions against China. Angry Western governments delayed or restricted loans to Beijing. China's major source of interest-free and low interest loans, The World Bank, under American and Western European pressure, suspended \$780 million in new loans. Business people from America, Japan and Western Europe left China and threatened not to return.

The Bush administration announced several sanctions against the Chinese government, in an attempt to balance the preservation of diplomatic relations and express the outrage of some American people. These limited sanctions included:

Suspensions of both government and commercial exports of weapons, and suspension of military exchange visits between the US and the PRC. In addition, the president said that there would be a sympathetic evaluation of requests by Chinese students in the US for extension of their visas, medical assistance through the International Red Cross for persons injured in the military crackdown, and a reevaluation of other aspects of

Sino-US relations in line with development of events in the PRC. [Ref. 14, p 142]

The United States Congress went even further by suspending military contacts, trade and development programs, banning the sale of police equipment, and limiting the transfer of high-tech and nuclear material and components to China. Almost overnight China suffered unprecedented military, economic, and diplomatic setbacks. For many Americans, when relations with China (military or otherwise) are discussed, the images from the Cable News Network (CNN) at Tiananmen Square that night in early June, still come to mind.

#### **B. AFTER THE GULF WAR: THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY**

Since the late 1980s, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Chinese leaders and military analysts have attempted to identify some other (other than China's human rights record) international problems that could provide a new strategic basis for US-China relations, and that might once again persuade Americans to play down their ideological differences with China. Through the end of 1990, many Chinese still hoped that the perceived threat of the Soviet Union would serve that function. [Ref. 6, p 269]

When the Bush administration announced that it would seek United Nations (UN) sanctions against Iraq, as part of its effort to build a "new world order," China's veto power on the Security Council immediately made Beijing an important consideration in American strategy.

The Gulf crises provided a telling indication of Pacific Asia's dependence on outside powers and its peripheral political status. Virtually the entire Pacific Asian region - recipient of more than half of all the Middle East's oil - remained largely a spectator to the political initiatives and the land and sea actions of Western nations in the Gulf. Many Pacific Asians viewed the Western military retaliation against Iraq's



invasion of Kuwait to be unnecessary. ...China abstained on the UN Security Council vote that permitted military force to be used against Iraq. These are telling indicators of significant political and cultural gulfs that remain between Pacific Asia and the West. [Ref. 17, p 532]

China's abstention in the UN Security Council was in a large way due to two major concerns: its desire to maintain most favored nation (MFN) trading status with the United States, and to increase its prestige as a player in the international community. It also hoped for a renewal of American military cooperation. Had China exercised its veto power in the Security Council, it would have surely suffered the loss of MFN status and would have succeeded in further driving the already existing wedge between the military powers of the West (most importantly the United States) and the PLAN.

The largest impact of the 1990-1991 Gulf War has been to confirm Beijing's belief in the power of high-tech weapons and equipment. China's future in the international technology trade will depend heavily on new foreign investments and information. This technology and foreign investment will be necessary if the Chinese people are to build the powerful People's Navy of their dreams.

The Chinese belief that American military intervention in Iraq was both unnecessary and unwise was strengthened as they realized that the US had not totally succeeded in overthrowing Saddam Hussien nor in solving all the problems of the region. Gradually they reasoned that the American juggernaut was less ominous than they had originally feared. [Ref. 6, p 274] Consequently, they became more relaxed and more confident in themselves as they dealt with the Americans.

Chinese leaders concluded that cooperation on international issues would maximize China's diplomatic leverage and maneuverability. The developments in the Persian Gulf led the Chinese to make some general adjustments in that direction.

China now focused on improving relations with its Asian neighbors. It stopped its criticism of Gorbachev's economic and political reforms and continued to expand diplomatic, economic, and military relations with Moscow. Peking muted its criticism of the Japanese defense policy, even when Tokyo dispatched a flotilla of minesweepers to the Persian Gulf... While still eschewing formal diplomatic relations with Seoul, it agreed, over Pyongyang's objections, to the simultaneous admission of both Koreas to the United Nations. And there were continuing signs of improvement in China's relation with Vietnam, even before the successful conclusion of the negotiations on Cambodia. All these steps suggested that Peking was attempting to reduce tensions with the rest of Asia to gain the diplomatic leverage to deal with the United States from as advantageous a position as possible. [Ref. 6, p 275]

While all of this diplomatic posturing was important to China's standing in the international community, the impact of technology on the decisive, American led coalition, victory over Iraq had left its mark. The overwhelming success of Western technology in the Gulf War confirmed to the leadership in Beijing that military modernization needed to be advanced and that increased defense spending would be necessary if China was to be a competitive military (naval) power. In the words of Dr. David Winterford,

Although the current Chinese defense buildup predates the Gulf War, the decisive victory by the United States and its coalition partners pointedly and painfully illustrated the backwardness of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and its general lack of preparedness to fight high technology warfare. The leadership has reacted with a mixture of envy and dismay to the stunning use of advanced technology by the United States in the Gulf War. One of the most telling lessons of that war drawn by Beijing was that superiority in numbers matters little against quality of weapons and forces. In other words, the Gulf War demonstrated to Chinese strategists their wisdom in jettisoning several years ago much of

the fundamental principles of Maoist military theory, the people's war. [Ref. 10, p 5]

Since the end of the Gulf War, Chinese leaders have placed a new emphasis on developing state of the art technology and seem to have concluded that military science and technology constitute essential components of national power. [Ref. 19] The 1990-1991 defense expenditures had been increased by 15.5%. [Ref. 21] The PLAN again increased its defense spending in 1991-1992 by 13.8% over the previous year. [Ref. 20] Both of these rather large increases can be attributed to the military lessons of the Gulf War. In addition to these military spending increases the PLAN has substantial additional funds from China's booming arms exports. [Ref. 22] Furthermore, reports indicated that the PLAN military commanders had been promised double-digit annual increases through 1995. [Ref. 23] This substantial increase in defense spending will certainly produce a positive effect on the Chinese navy but it cannot achieve the ultimate combat capability that the government has set as its goal.

### **C. THE PRC NAVY IN 1993**

As previously stated, China has spent close to \$2 billion on imports of modern equipment and weapons since mid-1989. The 1991 increase in the military budget followed a 15% rise in 1990, and sources expect continued defense budget to increases of about 10% each year for at least the next four years. [Ref. 26, p 37] The actual figures are peanuts in the light of modern costs. Much remains to be done particularly in providing weapons and sensors effective in modern warfare, this was never more evident than after the Gulf War. While progress has been slow, nuclear powered submarines continue to receive top priority in China's naval circles. Only one nuclear

powered submarine with ballistic missile capabilities (SSBN) is currently in service, while nuclear powered attack submarines (SSNs) are being launched at the rate of one every three years. Although the diesel electric submarine force remains over 80% obsolete, this potential force should not be underestimated.

In an effort to improve its ability to project power into the South and East China Seas, China has been seeking to upgrade both its Air Force and its Navy. Since 1991, China has purchased 24 sophisticated SU-27 fighters from the former Soviet Union and is negotiating to purchase the MiG-31 aircraft. [Ref. 35] The SU-27 is comparable to the American F-15 and is considered a great leap forward from China's most advanced planes, its 1950s vintage F-8 fighters. The new planes will help China update its tactics and strategy and give China an edge over Vietnam in any possible clash over the Spratly Islands.

Construction of an airstrip on Woody Island in the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, has allowed forward basing of aircraft into the South China Sea. Previously, Chinese planes flying to the Spratlys from Hainan Province have been able to fly over the islands for just five to ten minutes before having to turn back for refueling. Acquisition of air-to-air refueling technology, reportedly from Iran, will greatly enhance air presence in the region and allow the air force to provide air cover for naval operations over greater distances in the South China Sea. [Ref. 26, p 38]

Modernization to extend naval operations beyond China's coastal waters began with a short term effort to upgrade its anti-aircraft and ship-to-ship missiles, improving anti-submarine warfare capabilities, and obtaining

more ballistic missile submarines. The long-term goal has been to acquire an aircraft carrier with the accompanying ships necessary to support such a battle group. China is currently converting a ship to serve as a helicopter carrier, and there have been consistent, unconfirmed, reports that it may bid for one of two Soviet aircraft carriers under construction at Nikolayev on the Black Sea.

The PLAN expects to rely primarily on the local ship-building industry for a new generation of warships that soon will enter service. The current priority is on the acquisition of destroyers, frigates and smaller patrol boats. A longer-term objective is the procurement of a small aircraft carrier. In a number of internal speeches throughout late 1992, military chiefs have reiterated the need for China to buy or build an aircraft carrier. But lack of funds is likely to delay a firm decision until the end of this decade. [Ref. 28]

Construction of the *Luda* type destroyers (DDGs) continues while a modernization program is currently underway using French technology. New installations include *Crotale* air defense system (surface-to-air missile or SAM) and modern fire control systems. New construction frigates are acquiring modern surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs) and helicopters, but they lack sufficient air defense weaponry. [Ref. 36]

Construction of new tank landing ships continues but only at a rate sufficient to replace the older vessels. The existing amphibious force is sufficient for operations against offshore islands and in such near by areas as the Spratlys, but it is nowhere near sufficient for major power projection.

There are persistent reports of proposals to acquire a helicopter support ship with STOVL (short take-off and vertical landing) combat aircraft

capabilities. It remains to be seen whether this will materialize. In summary, until China can complete her massive modernization task, China's very numerous naval units will have to rely on sheer weight of numbers to overcome their much more sophisticated neighbors including Japan, Russia, and of course the United States.

Probably the most significant development of 1992-1993 was the Chinese Navy's major exercise 3,000 nautical miles off the China coast. Other naval accomplishments of the 1992-1993 time frame include the modernization of a second *Luda* class destroyer and the commissioning of four new helicopter equipped ships. Over the last four years, some 80 *Lienyun* coastal minesweepers have been built, and the naval air force is credited with 50 additional Q-5 FGA (fighter ground attack) aircraft. [Ref. 25]

In summation, China's naval forces at the end of 1992 and early 1993 included the following: [Refs. 24 and 25]\*

**Personal:** 260,000 total personal including 27,000 for coastal defense, 6,000 marines and 25,000 in the naval air force.

**Submarines:** 93 total

Strategic submarines: 1 SSBN

Tactical submarines: 92

SSN: 4 Han

SSG: 1 modified Romeo (Type ES5G)

SS: 87

3 improved Ming (Type ES5E)

84 Romeo (Type ES3B)

**Principal Surface Combatants:** 55 total

Destroyers: 18

1 modified Luda

15 Luda

2 Ex-Soviet Gordy class

Frigates: 37

26 Jianghu with 4 different variations

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\* For a detailed break-down of the entire PLA and Navy see: The Military Balance, Asia-Pacific region in the, *Asian Defence Journal*, January 1993, pp 96-99.

9 Type II ASW ships  
2 Type III ASTT ships

**Patrol and coastal combatants:** approximately 915 total

Missile craft: 215

125 Huangfeng/Hola (Ex-Soviet Osa-Type)

90 Hegu/Hema (Komar-Type)

Torpedo craft: approximately 160

100 Huchan and 60 P-6s

Patrol: approximately 540

Coastal: 110

10 Haizhui

90 Hainan

10 Ex-Soviet Kronstadt class

Inshore Vessels: 380

Riverine: 50

Mine Warfare: 128

Amphibious: 61

Support and miscellaneous: approximately 136

Including 3 Icebreakers and 25 Ocean going tugs

**Naval Air Forces:** 840 shore based combat aircraft and 61 helicopters.

Bombers: 30 H-6 and 130 H-5

FGA: 100

Fighter: 600 including the J-5/6/7

ASW: 15 SA-321

Helicopters: 15 SA-321, 40 Z-5, 10 Z-9

Miscellaneous: 60 transport aircraft

**Deployment and Bases:**

**North Sea Fleet:** Responsible for coastal defense from the Korean border (Yalu River) to just south of Lianyungang.

Bases: Qingdao (HQ), Dalian (Luda), Huludao, Weihai, Chengshan and nine coastal defense districts.

Forces: 2 submarines, 3 escorts, 1 mine warfare, 1 amphibious squadron and about 325 patrol and coastal combatants.

**East Sea Fleet:** Responsible for coastal defense from south of Lianyungang to Dongshan.

Bases: Shanghai (HQ), Wusong, Dinghai, Hangzhou and seven coastal districts.

Forces: 2 submarines, 2 escorts, 1 mine warfare, 1 amphibious squadron, about 270 patrol and coastal combatants, with 1 marine cadre division.

**South Sea Fleet:** Responsible for coastal defense from Dongshan to the Vietnam border and seaward, including the Paracel and Spratly Islands.

Bases: Zhanjiang (HQ), Shantou, Guangzhou, Haikou, Yulin, Beihai, Huangpu; plus outposts on the Paracel and Spratly Islands, and nine coastal defense districts.

Forces: 2 submarines, 2 escorts, 1 mine warfare, 1 amphibious squadron and about 320 patrol and coastal combatants, with 1 marine battalion.

China's People's Liberation Army/Navy (PLAN) is the largest naval force in the Far East, but the quality of its equipment does not place it in the front rank of Western style naval forces. The multi-service "peripheral defense" concept adopted in the late 1980s (replacing the coastal "naval self-defense" concept of the 1970s) is still being adhered to, with the level of interest in long-range, blue water, exercises showing an increase over previous years. [Ref. 27, p 123] The seaborne element (the navy) of China's defense force has never been perceived as a high priority when it comes to allocating funds. The navy has always been and will more than likely continue to be the little brother, or junior service, to the PLA (Army).

Nevertheless, a drive is underway in China to build a blue water navy that will give the PRC more muscle in Asia in the 21st century. Beijing's explanation is that military muscle will help safeguard the nation's economic development by guaranteeing domestic stability and safe borders. Viewed from Beijing, the post-Cold War world remains a dangerous and uncertain place. While the Soviet threat is all but gone, the United States still poses an ideological challenge to the last communists.

As the Cold War gave way to a complex, evolving new world order, the Chinese felt obliged to deal continuously with the American factor. It was always the United States they perceived as their ultimate threat, and forced them to spend as much as they did in building their credible fleet. They could never consider entering any agreements on arms control - especially



involving the Navy and the Air Force - without weighing the capabilities and policies of the United States.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS: 1993 AND BEYOND

It has been clearly demonstrated in the course of this thesis that the American factor has been at the heart of China's maritime doctrine. The development of the Chinese navy and the evolution of China's maritime doctrine have depended primarily upon the entire gamut of US - China political, and diplomatic relations. This will continue to be true in the future. This concluding chapter will not venture to predict either the future of the Chinese navy or the future of China's maritime doctrine. It will however, stress those highlights, in current international relations in East Asia and the Western Pacific, which reinforce my conviction that the United States will continue to be as influential on policy-making in China in the future, as it has been in the past.

The Chinese share in the general opinion that the United States must stay in force to ensure that a military vacuum is not created, one that others might be tempted to fill. China's present program of military modernization for example, could become a more destabilizing factor in the Asia-Pacific region were it not for the balance of the United States.

In general it is safe to say that the risk of naval conflict in the region is quite low at least for now, but latent security fears still exist. China is determined to see to it that its historical territorial waters remain under its control. Beijing is preparing itself with the capability to show respectable force in the region even if it risks alienating both Japan and the United States. Alienation of these two great powers would however, have its economic and

strategic implications, and therefore, China is likely to take great care in pressing its claims in the East and South China Seas. All this is due to China's recognition of the overwhelming power of the United States Navy.

Another threat to regional peace that looms on the immediate horizon is the potential for a Korean nuclear capability. North Korea's nuclear program has caused a flurry of activity among the major nations seeking stability and continued peace in the Northern Pacific. Bilateral and multilateral arrangements of every kind are being considered to prevent the outbreak of any type of military conflict. Whatever action China takes in this troubling matter is bound to be conditioned by American official attitudes, backed by the persuasive presence of American military power.

The American factor has always been and still is the major determinant in the development of China's maritime doctrine, and on a much larger scale, the development of China as an economic partner and potential strategic adversary or ally. The United States is currently in a critical position. Planners and strategists alike will have to consider how the United States can best formulate policies of mutual benefit for China and itself. It is fundamental that the United States remain actively engaged on all of the issues concerning China from human rights to military doctrine and development. One thing is for certain, if the United States is not there to respond to China's needs, then some other Western country will fill in the gap!

Trade with China should be encouraged, but appeasing Beijing on moral or practical issues is wrong. America's China policy will always be controversial, but basic organizing principles are possible. Washington must strike a balance between confronting China and turning a blind eye. The issues it objects to must be clear transgressions against universal

moral principles or the demands of global stability. It must give Beijing an incentive to reverse course. It was wise to continue China's most favored nation trading status while continuing that the West wants long term cooperation, but this requires China to moderate itself on select issues. [Ref. 32]

#### **A. US NAVAL PRESENCE IN EAST ASIA**

East Asia now is the world's single most economically dynamic region. According to World Bank figures, for example, the region's developing states, excluding only Japan, averaged growth rates of 8.4% in the 1980s. This put them far ahead of Latin America at 1.6%, the Middle East and North Africa at 2.9%, and Western industrial countries at 3%. [Ref. 32]

Almost ironically, the region's economic vitality has generated certain downsides. China's modernization, for example, while increasing trade flows, has led to a stronger Chinese military and domestic tensions which have alarmed their neighbors. A major conflict, or even an arms race, would greatly destabilize the region economically and diplomatically. The United States is, and must remain, the great balancer in this unstable but dynamic environment. American presence in East Asia's markets is vital to its own prosperity and will remain so in the 21st century. At the start of the 1990s, almost 40% of all US trade was with the Asia Pacific region. This trade totaled some \$300 billion, while trade with Europe amounted to \$201 billion. [Ref. 32]

President Clinton has stated on many occasions that America's strategy will be "to compete, not retreat." Stability in the region requires America to show the flag. The fact that most East Asian nations want the US Navy to remain in the Asian searoutes provides evidence that America is considered a trustworthy state. In stabilizing the region, the United States is also protecting

its national economic interest. Brent Scowcroft, former national security advisor to President George Bush, noted that,

Foreign trade...is vital to America...foreign policy and domestic policy have become two sides of the same coin. America must be a global leader for altruistic reasons - but selfish reasons should (also) move us. [Ref. 32]

America's policy of "containment" (of communism) has been replaced by the objective of maintaining a stable balance of power among regional states. This balance of power will prevent any one actor from establishing regional hegemony, and it will deter or defend against the use of force for the resolution of disagreements or crises. It will also prevent or at least dampen a conventional and nuclear arms race which only stands to fuel suspicion in the region. Forward deployed naval, air, and army bases are the very tools of Washington's Asia policy. Many Asian states have in recent years expressed concerns that the US might scale down its presence too far due to the collapse of the USSR and America's many domestic problems.

The potential for expansion of the current naval rivalries in the Asia-Pacific region is high. The question of continued US naval presence and engagement in the region is very much in the mind of Asian naval strategists, the least of which is certainly not the Chinese. Prior to the fall of the former Soviet Union, the Cold War structure (bipolar) contributed to the stability of the region. Today with the Russian Pacific Fleet, while still capable, basically out of commission due to fiscal constraints and deep morale problems, the opportunity exists for other regional actors to take up some of the slack and venture into the arena left vacant by the USSR and possibly, eventually, by the United States. This may be evident in the recent

military/naval buildup, sometimes referred to as an arms race, of the nations in the region, including Malaysia, India, Taiwan, and of course, China.

Despite the end of the Cold War and the fact that the Russian naval fleet will not likely be a threat to the region any time real soon, the situation in the Asia-Pacific is not as stable as it could be. Many in the region and in the United States argue that the Chinese have embarked on a new imperialist phase. The justification for their beliefs lie in the South China Sea. China has built naval and air bases in the Paracel Islands and has recently purchased an aerial refueling capability from the Russians which allows their fighters extended range into the disputed waters. Beijing has announced an uncompromising claim to the entire Spratly archipelago and many Southeast Asians wonder if this will stimulate the Americans to oppose what they label as Chinese military expansionism.

The uncertainty in the region has been a hold over from the Cold War. While the United States and the former Soviet Union are no longer at odds, many countries in the region still remember the era of Japanese aggression and today worry about the direction of China's military objectives. Making matters worse, the recent American pullout from the Philippines has led to uncertainty in the minds of many Asians as to the resolve of American military presence in the region. Furthermore, a nuclear armed and politically unstable North Korea only adds to the tensions of the day.

## **B. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS**

Today China is more comfortable with its security environment than it has been since the founding of the PRC in 1949. The PRC does not face a plausible external military threat to its heartland but it does however, have

many on going disputes offshore. China's global position and leverage may have been weakened by the end of the Cold War but one can not over look China's position as a permanent member of the United Nation's Security Council. With membership as one of the "big five," China maintains the powerful veto option, and the US. and others should not take this too lightly. China's position on security matters will have to be seriously considered as long as the United States, in the name of collective security, is willing to act under the auspices of the United Nations.

As in the past, today China supports a continued American naval presence in the Western Pacific to counter any latent Japanese militarism, which in China's opinion is the most obvious potential maritime threat. In the meantime, Japan, while publicly downplaying any aspirations of expansionist goals, is quietly developing one of the world's most modern naval forces. Again from China's perspective, the possibility of renewed Japanese imperialism cannot be simply dismissed. China has a long and tainted history and the Chinese people have vivid memories of infringements upon their sovereignty.

China's history of exploitation by Western imperialist powers has had a strong maritime component. England, France, Germany, and the United States all arrived on the Chinese mainland from the sea. From my prospective, that of a United States naval officer, given the current economic (and to some degree military) interdependence it is difficult to conceive any realistic maritime threat to the Chinese coast. From a Chinese prospective,\*

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\* The author enjoyed an extensive one to one interview with Lcdr. Yang Zhi Qun at the Center for International Relations and Arms Control at Stanford University's Galvez House on 8 September 1993. Yang provided the author with valuable insights on his ("the Chinese")

however, Japan's potential maritime strength and America's often ambivalent attitude toward China are of primary concern. Regardless, China is bent on securing what it sees as its natural and historical sovereignty. This is the Chinese justification for the high cost of modernizing its naval forces.

At stake in East Asia is the security of the major sealanes of trade and communication, specifically in the South China Sea, where the Straits of Malacca connect the Pacific and Indian Oceans. One only need look at a map of the region to see the maritime implications should a security vacuum develop. Such a vacuum might allow a potentially hegemonistic nation with territorial aspirations the power to interfere with and even interdict upon international shipping transiting the South China Sea.

It is time that analysts of maritime affairs consider the possible impact of naval development, including the benefits of mutual cooperation, on Asian security. This is the best way to prevent economic rivalry from spilling over into military confrontation. Surely in this process, a substantial forward deployment of American forces is a critical component.

### **1. Prospects For Multilateral Maritime Security**

Asian collective security arrangements will have to take into account the three major players in the region, the United States, Japan, and of course, the PRC. A short list of a country's national interests, prioritizes survival of the state, economic prosperity, and a stable and secure world. It is safe to say that survival is in the forefront of every nation's concerns and that economic prosperity may take a close second. But in the third position, a

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perceptions of potential maritime threats in the region. Lcdr Yang is a researcher at the Naval Research Institute of the PLA at China's Association for Military Science (CAMS) in Beijing.



stable and secure world, is a necessary ingredient if the first two objectives are to be safely met.

In the search for new collective security configurations in the Asia-Pacific region there have been many initiatives emphasizing economic and security concerns. The first is the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Asia (CSCA), while not necessarily a maritime related forum, is based on some of the same basic premises.

First, economic circumstances that can no longer sustain a US presence and "policeman's role" in Asia as heretofore. Second, that the security arrangements that had been basically in place for the past several decades is now obsolete and that new alternatives are in order. Third, that existing security arrangements are anachronistic in the post Cold War era, especially now that the threats previously posed by China and the former Soviet Union have to be viewed in a new light. [Ref. 29]

It is hoped that the CSCA will be able to persuade all of the countries in the region to engage in discussions about security in a mutually beneficial way. While the United States may want to spearhead such dialogue in multilateral security alone, it may be easier to approach it via the second initiative, the Asean Post Ministerial Conference. According to Zara Dian,

A lessening of the US role in bilateral defence links and forward deployment suggests a corresponding increase in burden sharing of security tasks among the countries of Pacific Asia, a development which is not altogether a bad thing for the region since it will mean a spread of the chore and responsibility on a more equitable basis. But Washington will have to be very mindful that this will not be a signal of a weakening of its regional role and political resolve. [Ref. 29]

Given the mood of most Americans, this premise of burden sharing will go a long way in the hearts and minds of those concerned that the United States is spending too much time and energy on security in Asia when the problems at home seem insurmountable.

With regard to regional security, the Chinese have repeatedly stressed the importance of regional peace for the enhancement of economic development and have repeatedly reiterated their stand on the settlement of disputes through "peaceful means." As far as China's military expansion is concerned, China insists that its modernization is designed to meet its own security needs and not to fill a power vacuum in the region. China has assured its neighbors that it has no hegemonistic motives, not now or in the future, and has stressed the importance of stability in the region so that countries may concentrate on their economic development.

China has gone so far as to give support for the Malaysian proposal for the establishment of the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) as it would help promote economic development. China's support for the EAEC should come as no real surprise as they have repeatedly stated their desire for continued economic development and regional stability. At least for the immediate future, the United States has nothing to lose and everything to gain by supporting China's ambitious economic modernization program. [Ref. 30]

While dialogue between countries in the region is an excellent place to start, the number one problem facing those interested in multilateral security (maritime) arrangements is trust, or lack thereof. Because of the inherent lack of trust in the region, any progress will first have to overcome a long regional history of ill-will and political baggage. Any multilateral maritime security plans will have to start out slowly, progressing faster only after common ground has been met and trusting relationships have been fostered.

Who will take the lead in multilateral maritime security dialogue? It is clear that the United States would like to consider itself the centerpiece in such discussions, but it is also clear that China is not so eager to fall in behind and follow that lead. Given China's history in dealing with the West this can be understood, furthermore, China sees itself and the natural regional leader, the "Middle Kingdom," a concept that far outdates the United States of America. But it is more reasonable to assume that China primarily wants to be recognized as one of the leading participants in the shaping of a new world order. It wants an equal voice with the United States, Japan, Russia or anybody else in negotiating whatever system or organization may be agreed upon for future security of the East Asia/Pacific region.

Given the uniqueness of navies, it may be easiest to start collective security on the oceans. As stated earlier, there are few diplomatic tools as flexible as naval presence and power projection. The fact that naval forces play a crucial role in the military balance of the region is not the only reason for raising the issue of bringing naval matters into the negotiations.

Naval force is becoming an increasingly universal means for combat operations, not only at sea but also, because of sophisticated deck aircraft and long-range cruise missiles, on land. Naval mobility and the potential for buildup of naval forces near the other side's coast make naval forces the most provoking and destabilizing type of armed force. [Ref. 31]

It is for this very reason that I believe a large cooperative naval force in the region could in fact be very stabilizing as it would help to prevent any unilateral aggressive action and the smaller, less well armed, nations of the region could at least feel safer. Here again American presence may be necessary to keep historical antagonists apart.

One forum that has received some attention is that of the United Nations (UN) discussions on creating a standing naval force. Historically only a handful of UN naval operations have taken place, usually US led and controlled. Generally speaking, most discussions of prospective UN military operations have avoided the naval aspect. Recently however, the UN has published a memorandum identifying nine broad UN naval mission areas and their supporting tasks. They include: providing for humanitarian assistance; intervening for humanitarian purposes; interdicting sea and air traffic; conducting maritime peacekeeping; responding to aggression; controlling armaments/conducting demilitarization; enforcing maritime agreements; making a show of force and; protecting sea and air traffic. The last three items on this list offer new areas for multinational naval cooperation in a UN context.\*

If the United Nations is seriously looking to expand its role in maintaining international peace and security into the maritime arena, it will have to at least consider China's view. Currently there is no reason to anticipate a formal military alliance between China and any other nation (the United States included). The leadership of the PRC values its independence and flexibility too much to bind itself to the strategic interests of another country. However, on a smaller less binding scale, cooperation could be designed to include mutual assistance and coordination on maritime matters like weather/meteorology, search and rescue operations, and safety at sea issues.

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\* For an in depth discussion on the potential role for the United Nations in maritime affairs see: Jeffrey I. Sands, "Blue Hulls: Multinational Naval Cooperation and the United Nations," (Center for Naval Analysis, Alexandria, Virginia, July 1993).

## 2. Challenges and Opportunities

The United States and others concerned are continually monitoring China's upward trend in military spending which can be seen as a deliberate campaign by the PLA and Navy to transition its forces into a regional and eventually global power. The double-digit increases in military spending since 1990 coupled with efforts to modernize its forces and weaponry paint a colorful picture of China's firm resolve to become the great military power in Asia.

China has always seen itself as the natural regional hegemon. Its sense of historical destiny and its culture, population size, and military potential all lend weight to this ambition. It is generally believed by Chinese strategists that China must have a "blue water" navy, not for sailing across the Pacific but, to project power and protect national interests in the East and South China Seas.

China has had a long and impressive maritime history, it has been a major maritime power in the past and aspires to become one again. Regardless of how multilateral maritime security arrangements develop, China's naval capacity will effect the strategic balance in Asia.

The next move (regarding China in the larger strategic context) must be precisely calculated, understood, and coordinated by all the principals. Regarding the specific issue of China and the sea, the players must ask themselves, how important is it, and what are the consequences of China's success or failure in its latest quest for maritime and naval power? [Ref. 1, p 287]

In the early 1980s, David Muller identified China's next two national objectives that both hold true for the 1990s and into the 21st century.

These objectives had then and still have a strong maritime component. Muller assessed the situation as follows,

The first objective, economic modernization and development, depends upon energy and foreign trade, which directly imply offshore oil, an exclusive economic zone, and a large merchant marine. These in turn imply the need for a strong navy. The second objective, the consolidation of irredentist territories - Taiwan and the South China Sea islands - under Beijing's rule implies the use or at least the threat of naval force. In the past, seapower was indeed irrelevant to China's pursuit of its national objectives. In the future, seapower will be a primary means by which China will strive to achieve them. [Ref. 2, p 236]

On a larger scale, China's defense modernization cannot be viewed separately from the sweeping reforms now in progress across the country. There is good reason to believe that China will achieve its moderate national defense modernization objectives if the reform is successful and the economy develops as planned. However, certain external factors could influence the rate at which defense modernization goes forward, the extent to which it is carried out, and even its priority status vis-a-vis other national goals, most decidedly the American factor. With only moderate American engagement, China will continue efforts to ease international tensions and maintain peace and stability in the Asian-Pacific area, always with the goal of keeping on course with its modernization program and its economic development.

Of course no adequate assessment of the implications of Sino-American military relations is possible without some estimate of their effects on future Chinese military capabilities. Since US inputs are by no means the sole determining factor in the Chinese modernization effort, two questions must be answered.

What is the most likely result of Chinese military modernization efforts through the end of the century? And, how is the US-China

military relationship likely to affect that outcome? ...Chinese military modernization efforts through the end of this century and for some period beyond are likely to result in only modest improvements to basic military capabilities. [Ref. 33, pp 97-99]

Some attention must be paid to the possibility of limitation of armaments, including the navy, in future Chinese-American relations. The Chinese have their own nuclear and conventional arms-limitation policies and they all back down to a goal of a "level playing field." There are two ways to achieve this level playing field. One is to cut down the stronger, and the other is to build up the weaker. Of course the Americans want to limit the growth of the power of the Chinese, and the Chinese will insist that any limit on their own growth will be accepted only as Americans agree to cuts in American strength. Negotiations on accommodations of the two points of view will be long and hard, and until satisfactory compromises are reached, the American naval presence will continue to be the strongest keeper of the peace in East Asia and the Pacific.

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